



Dominion's End Vol 1: **Raining Stars At World's End**
Original novel in Chinese by: [御我 \(Yu Wo\)](#)
Translated by [Prince Revolution](#)

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Prince Revolution!(or PR! for short)was started in late April in 2009 by Erialis for the purpose of translating and sharing the ½ Prince and The Legend of Sun Knight novels (and now many others) with other fans (who unfortunately couldn't read Chinese).

PR!'s crew has since exploded to include several translators who double as Chinese to English editors and several Proofreaders. They also have sister sites translating the novels into many other languages.

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Dominion's End Vol 1: Raining Stars At World's End

Original novel in Chinese by: 御我 (Yu Wo)

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Prologue: Jiang Shuyu

The moment I opened my eyes, I was immediately aware of how weak my body felt, to the point where it was hard to even breathe.

Was I badly wounded? That said, I ought be grateful I was still alive in the first place, since the last thing I had seen before closing my eyes pretty much had me pegged as dead. I never imagined I'd still have a chance to open my eyes again.

I just hoped I wasn't injured too badly. In times like these, being a cripple was no different from being dead. That said...

Some might say it's better to be dead than alive.

At a sudden sound, I tried my hardest to twist my neck to look over. My vision was still very blurry, but I could just about make out a white silhouette walking in, all four limbs present and hale, all moving very naturally. So, it shouldn't be one of "those things."

That person didn't seem to notice that I was awake. They were bustling around in a world of their own. In the end, I could only speak up, though I didn't expect to hear such a hoarse, low voice. *How many days have I been sleeping for?*

It was a miracle I hadn't been abandoned.

"Where am I?"

The white-clothed person before me jumped and gaped at me with

bulging eyes. It was only after a long moment that she screamed.

"Y-you're awake!"

Yes, a woman for sure. That scream is quite something. I really hoped we were somewhere safe; otherwise, that would draw plenty of unwanted attention.

She rushed over to the bed and started looking around frantically. I hadn't a clue what she was doing, but whatever it was, she wasn't helping me up or giving me a glass of water.

Although my vision was slowly clearing, I still couldn't see properly. I could only tell that I was lying in a white room, so white it was strange. It looked almost... clean.

"Where am I?" I repeated.

"Your home." The woman in white finally paid attention to me and gently said, "Don't worry, I've already pressed the call button. The doctor and your family will be over in just a moment."

My home? Call button? Family? I was a bit lost.

The woman in white didn't seem to plan on explaining further and my throat was screaming at me. At this point, there wasn't a single question that was more pressing than the biological need for liquids.

"Water!"

She quickly poured me a glass, but instead left it on the table where I couldn't reach and bent down to do something... *Is she playing around with me?*

I kept my face expressionless, unsure of how I was supposed to beg before she would hand over that glass.

Suddenly, the bed under me moved.

"Ah!" *Could it be, this is—*

The woman straightened and reassured me, "It's fine, it's fine, I just adjusted the bed so it's easier for you to drink."

I strained to move my neck and eyeballs, and only when I had confirmed that nothing else had appeared did I relax. Then I realized my posture had changed from fully horizontal to half-sitting up. I was bewildered. *Is this a hospital bed?* This was a rare thing in itself, and the fact that I had the chance to be lying in one was almost improbable.

The woman in white brought the cup to my mouth, and there was even a straw placed inside. She reminded me with worry in her voice, "Drink slowly. Be careful of choking."

Why is it that I get better treatment only when I am injured so badly? Does that person actually feel guilty because I've gotten hurt?

He... can still feel guilt?

The moment I started drinking, I stopped caring about anything else. *This water is too delicious!* I concentrated my entire being on drinking. *Am I too thirsty, or is this water simply just that tasty?* I hadn't drunk water that was this good in a long while.

I carefully sipped at the precious water, until the door crashed open, and I jolted into the air in surprise. It was only because the woman in white quickly held me down that I didn't fall straight onto the floor.

"Gē!"

What? I blinked. Someone rushed in, but I was reluctant to let go of the straw in my mouth, so I just watched them rush to the bedside as I drank. My thoughts were that even if there was something world-shattering, it would have to wait until I was done drinking this glass of water.

"Gē, you're finally awake!"

I tried to focus my eyes, and slowly, the face of a crying girl emerged. With an oval face that still retained its childishness, she looked to be around fifteen to sixteen years old, with large, round eyes shining brightly from under crescent-shaped eyebrows. Just this pair of eyes was enough to make this girl worth a good deal of supplies.

She cried, wiped her tears, looked at me, and started crying again.

After finishing the water, I unwillingly let go of the straw in my mouth and asked her suspiciously, "Do we know each other?"

Her eyes widened. It seemed like my question was real shock to her. *Maybe we really do know each other?* Although I'd come to know a lot of people throughout the many years, there was no way I'd completely forget such a pretty and cute girl if I'd met her before.

Flustered, she exclaimed, "I-I'm your little sister!"

I was just about to say I didn't have any little sisters when even more people rushed in from outside, around five or six of them.

I stared at them, squinting as I tried to make out their features. I didn't recognize a single one of them. *What is going on? Even if he sold me, no one would want such a wounded invalid!*

After all, I wasn't even worth a glass of water.

"Xiao Yu!"

"Xiao Yu, you're awake? You're really awake?"

"Say something, Xiao Yu!"

Surrounded by these people, I felt at a complete loss. Having just woken up, my brains were still addled, and now this group of people kept shouting at me, sending waves of pain through my head. I hadn't a clue what they were yelling about, and even if I caught the occasional sentence, I didn't understand what it meant.

What is going on? Although it was possible it was all a calculated trap, I had to admit I simply wasn't worth the effort for people to put up an

act.

"Dàgē!" That "younger sister" of mine anxiously called out to one of them, "Èrgē just said he doesn't know me!"

I looked toward that "Dàgē" — Big Brother was a very handsome man, and, creasing his brow, he asked, "Xiao Yu, do you remember me?"

"Dàgē."

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. My "sister" got even more agitated, shrieking, "You're teasing me again! Even though you recognized me and Dàgē!"

"I don't." I shook my head lightly, noticing that my neck felt looser. It seemed like it was more a case of me lying down for too long, rather than being paralyzed. *Whew.* Only when I felt better did I continue responding to everyone. "You were the one who called him 'Dàgē'."

That "Big Brother's" face darkened and he turned to ask the woman in white. "Nurse! What's going on?"

So she's a nurse? It was only now that I recognized her uniform, and it certainly matched the nurse's uniforms in my memory. *But how is it possible that there are still nurses around...?*

The nurse frowned, and asked cautiously, "Do you remember your name?"

I didn't know why, but I had a feeling it'd be pretty bad if I told them

my name. They were clearly treating me as someone else, which was the only reason why they would take care of someone who was as grievously injured as me. Perhaps it was even because of a case of mistaken identity. *But if they discovered that I am not that person, would I still be enjoying the same treatment?*

But why would they mistake me for that person? Did my face get disfigured? I wanted to touch my face, but I couldn't lift my hands, so I just gave up.

"I don't remember." This should be a safe enough answer.

Everyone's expressions darkened, and the nurse said quickly, "I'll call over the doctor."

"Well, no matter what, Xiao Yu waking up is more important than anything else." "Big Brother" remarked lightly. "It's good that you're up. Everything else can come in its own time."

With that, everyone perked up, looking at me with eyes of hope. Being on the receiving end of those gazes, a surge of guilt suddenly welled up in my heart. This Xiao Yu must mean a lot to them, and lying to them might mean her losing her chance of survival. Compared to Xiao Yu, so deeply cherished by many, why would I, who had nothing at all, want to bring harm to someone else just for the sake of survival?

"I'm not Xiao Yu." I looked at them calmly and then admitted, "You've got the wrong person."

Everyone looked surprised. That younger sister said bewilderedly, "How could we possibly not recognize you? Èrgē, what are you talking about?"

"What did you call me?" I suddenly realized something was amiss. I'd been feeling groggy just now and wasn't hearing properly, so I had thought "Èrgē" was a name or a nickname, but when put together with "Dàgē," "Big Brother," I realized the real meaning of "Èrgē" — "second brother."

The younger sister blinked, and obediently repeated her words. "Èrgē."

No way! No matter how badly my looks were ruined, there is no way I could ever be called "Èrgē"!

Ignoring the weakness in my limbs, I strained to touch my face. The skin there was smooth, and although my face felt thinner, there wasn't the bumpy feeling of scars, much less the texture of bandages and what not.

"What's my name?" A chill crept over me. This situation was already beyond my expectations. *What is going on? What is happening to me?!*

"Jiang Shuyu." Big Brother replied, looking troubled.

"...Which three characters?"

"Jiang for 'jiāngyù,' dominion. The 'shu' in 'shūjí,' 'book.' And the 'yu' in 'yǔzhòu.' 'universe.'"

My breathing picked up, and a machine next to me let out a piercing wail.

The nurse exclaimed, "His breathing and heartbeat are too fast!"

"Xiao Yu!"¹

Concerned voices around me were calling out, but none of them were calling out to me.

I'm not Xiao Yu, I'm not Xiao Yu. I'm called Guan Weijun. He always called me Xiao Jun, not Xiao Yu!

Footnotes

¹ **"Xiao Yu":** Our protagonist at first mistakes them to be calling her "小雨," a girl's name that means "rain," when they're instead calling her "小宇," a boy's name that is the first character for "universe." Both names are pronounced "Xiao Yu."

Chapter #1: The Red Meteor Shower

So I really had died?

Sitting on the wheelchair, I looked at the complete stranger in the dressing mirror.

This is a fine-looking man, or perhaps I should say, boy?

He didn't look old, probably around seventeen or eighteen. Because he had been comatose for too long, he looked worn out and emaciated, but nevertheless retained his good looks. Thick eyebrows, large eyes, with facial features similar to that "Mèimei" but with the straight, tall nose reminiscent of the "Dàgē." They were unmistakably a trio of siblings.

"Èrgē, want me to take you on a walk around the house?"

The younger sister peeked in from behind the door. She was smiling, albeit a somewhat forced smile, as though she was worried that I'd reject her.

I kept silent, watching her smile grow more and more strained, until I couldn't take it anymore and asked, "Don't you need to go to school?" "I'm taking a bit of leave." The younger sister saw that I was silent and quickly added, "Dàgē gave me permission to! Dàgē said I should stay at home, and that it's better if someone you're close to stays with you. So I took two weeks of vacation. And it's almost the summer holiday anyway, so it's not a big deal. It won't delay my schoolwork!"

With summer holidays just around the corner, doesn't that mean it's

almost time for final exams? I smiled, choosing not to poke a hole in her lie.

"Sure, let's take a walk."

The younger sister breathed a sigh of relief and rushed over to push my wheelchair. Once out of the room, we passed through a short corridor on our way to the stairs. It was a mezzanine design, and you could see the dining room below had simple but tasteful furnishings. Only the cluster of black leather sofas looked somewhat more extravagant.

I opened my mouth to ask about things, but didn't know how to address her. It was very difficult to call her "Mèimei," so I was forced to ask, "What's your name?"

She looked taken aback, and replied in a hurt tone, "Jiang Shujun."

I was shocked to hear the word "Jun" and couldn't help but feel a little closer to this girl. I continued to ask, "What's Dàgē called?"

"Jiang Shutian."

I thought back to yesterday, and asked, "Then that older couple that day were our parents?"

"Um, no. That's Uncle and Auntie. We've been living with them since we were little."

I looked at her uncomprehendingly.

"Our parents passed away in a car accident." Shujun lowered her head, and said a little more quietly, "They passed away ten years ago." Hearing that, I suddenly remembered something else important, and asked, "How old am I?"

"Eighteen. You've already gotten into university, Èrgē, your first choice even!"

Eighteen... I was a little at a loss for words. I was supposed to be turning thirty-five, so I guess this was the second coming of the springtime of youth for me.

"Originally, when Èrgē got into university, Dàgē wanted everyone to go traveling together to celebrate. We even got Uncle and Auntie to come back to go with us, but..."

Shujun sounded incredibly sad, and my heart suddenly squeezed.

"What happened?" I was suddenly curious — how did a young kid of eighteen die just like that?

"A tile that had fallen off the wall of a building hit your head."

Pfftt! I wanted to burst into laughter. This was too ridiculous. A tile falls off and a dearly cherished boy is gone, replaced by an unwanted somebody who was neither a human nor a ghost.

"Èrgē, don't cry!" Shujun suddenly hugged me. Even though she was telling me not to cry, she sounded like she was about to burst into

tears herself, and kept on reassuring me, "Dàgē helped to get you time off university. You can go back once you're better. It shouldn't take long."

I'm not crying... Just as I was about to protest, I realized my cheeks felt cool. A touch told me that they were tears, but were they Xiao Yu or Xiao Jun's tears?

I buried the twinge of grief and continued to ask about things I was supposed to know. "How old are you and Dàgē?"

"Dàgē's twenty-seven, and I'm fifteen." Shujun seemed to understand that I wanted to know more about this family, so she continued elaborating without further prompting.

"After Mom and Dad passed away ten years ago, we moved into Uncle's place. Uncle and Auntie don't have any children. They treat us like we are their own. But they frequently fly places and are hardly at home. Dàgē is the same, so usually it is just the two of us at home."

I nodded, and suddenly remembered something else that I needed to ask. "Another guy and a woman were in the hospital room the other day. Who were they?"

"One is Dàgē's secretary, called Zhengxing. The other is Dàgē's bodyguard, Ceng Yunqian."

I blinked. *That Dàgē even has a bodyguard? Is he rich...? Wait, those names and occupations don't quite match up?* I turned to give her a suspicious look.

Seeing my expression, Shujun gave a laugh and explained, "Yes, the secretary is a guy and the bodyguard is a woman."

Right...

"We're rich?" I was a bit curious. The house looked quite nice, and the wheelchair I was sitting in was of good make, since Shujun was actually able to take me down the stairs. *So this family is at least fairly well off, right?*

"I guess we are?" Shujun replied uncertainly, "I heard Dàgē say that our family was originally very wealthy, but when Mom and Dad passed away, our stock market value plummeted and we had some cash flow problems. Uncle and Auntie are archaeologists, so they weren't really familiar with these things. So the company got stolen away by other executives. Around that time, we seemed to have lost a lot of money, so Uncle still feels very guilty about it even now."

I frowned. My gut feeling was that they had been set-up.

"Èrgē, don't worry," Shujun seemed to have gotten the wrong impression, and she hastily reassured me, "We still have money, and Dàgē's design company is starting to make profits too. Although it's just a small company, he said it should be plenty to cover for us, Uncle, and Auntie, so we just have to focus on studying."

Looking at Shujun I suddenly felt that Jiang Shutian was a terrific big brother, protecting his younger brother and sister so well that they didn't know anything at all; they just had to focus on their studies.

It's a small design company, yet the boss needs a bodyguard 24/7?

I didn't know what kind of business Jiang Shutian was doing to need a bodyguard, but it seemed like although the present wasn't like "that era," things still weren't completely peaceful here either.

Wait! What era is this anyway? I abruptly grabbed Shujun's hand, asking urgently, "What year is this?"

Shujun started with surprise, and quickly replied, "2015. It's still June. Don't worry Èrgē, you haven't been out for that long."

Hearing that year, my heart went cold and I almost couldn't speak. I just about managed to force out the words, "What day?"

"The nineteenth."

Damn...

No one would ever forget the 21st of June, 2015. The day when everyone's world collapsed.

And now, was my world going to collapse once more?

"Èrgē? What's the matter, Èrgē? I'll take you to the doctor!" Shujun rushed to wheel me away.

"It's nothing!" I quickly grabbed her hand and reassured her, "I'm fine. Just a few more questions. Which country are we in?"

Calm down, I mean, you've already died once. What else is there to be afraid of?

Except I really didn't want to experience that world and those things again. If I really had to experience everything all over again, then I'd rather just off myself when I got the chance!

But this girl in front of me really was quite a nice person, and she even had a big brother protecting her. If possible, I wanted to help them first. Maybe find a relatively safe place, load up on some resources, and hopefully once that was done, they'd have it easier afterwards.

"Hm? Èrgē, how'd you forget even that?" Shujun's eyes went wide. But even though she was astonished, she still obediently replied, "We're in Junguo."

In what? I've never heard of it before! Something was really off. We were speaking Chinese, and there wasn't anything strange about the intonation of words. *So how can I possibly be in a country I've never heard of?*

Shocked and doubtful, I could only continue my line of questioning. "How many continents are there in this world?"

"Seven." Shujun's expression grew stranger and stranger, but I couldn't care less about raising her suspicions. *Let's just get some things straight first!*

So that's the right number. Frowning, I asked, "Which seven?"

"Meisia, North Continent, South Kaia, Mid Kaia, the Arctic, the Woodlands, and Oceania."

All the names are wrong!

I took a few deep breaths before I could suppress my wildly fluctuating emotions, and continued, "Which continent are we on?"

"Meisia."

No, I should be in Asia! This isn't even the world I'm from! I didn't travel to the past, but rather to a completely different world!

In the midst of my panic, I realized that, since I was in a different world anyway, then perhaps "that" wouldn't happen again?

With that thought, I abruptly heaved a huge sigh of relief. No matter where I was, it would still be better than what would happen next!

Besides, this place didn't seem too different from the world I'd originally lived in. Even the way they reckoned time was the same, so it should be fairly easy to adjust to life here.

Could this be a "parallel world?" I've heard people say that the universe consists of a multitude of similar worlds branching out in parallel... If that is the case, don't tell me I might encounter another version of myself? That would be so awkward.

Whatever, as long as "that" doesn't happen, forget about seeing

another me, even if there are a few hundred of me, it wouldn't matter!

"What's Èrgē thinking about?" Shujun laughed and said, "So funny, your expression keeps changing."

"I'm wondering where Dàgē went."

Even though I'd figured out that "that" probably wouldn't happen, I would still feel better if that guy was around. If "that" really did end up happening, it didn't really matter if a sick, frail guy like me died, but if a beautiful young girl like Shujun didn't have a protector, then she would only meet with a tragic end.

"Dàgē is on a business trip." Shujun responded, then hastily explained, "It was some work that he'd already had scheduled, but because Èrgē got injured, Dàgē kept postponing the job as much as he could before taking it up. He really regretted it and even said that if he'd known that you would wake up right now, he'd have kept pushing back the work no matter what."

A business trip... I frowned, a little worried yet at the same time feeling that I was being a worrywart. *I mean, I'm already in a different world, so surely something similar won't happen again?*

Relax, it'll be fine! I exhaled a long, long breath and continued asking a variety of different questions. "How long was I comatose for?"

"A bit over a month."

Hm, not too long. No wonder I can still move. If I'd been out for a year

and a half, more likely than not I'd only be able to continue lying in that bed... *Footsteps?*

"Who is it?" I called out sharply.

Shujun jumped with fright. I glared dangerously at the person approaching. It was a stranger, a middle-aged man I hadn't seen in the ward yet.

"Èrgē, that's Lin-bó!¹" Shujun hastily reassured me, "He's our chef. He's been around from when our parents were still here. He's not a bad guy."

We actually have a chef. I was a little speechless. This kind of family was really too different from mine.

"Young Master, Miss, it's time to eat." Although Lin-bó was startled by me, he still remained respectful, making me feel extremely uncomfortable. In my previous life, the only people who were so courteous to me were the sales ladies whenever I was swiping my card to buy something.

"Okay, we're coming now." Shujun nodded at Lin-bó, her attitude towards him not much different from how you'd treat regular elders. Then, she lowered her head to tell me, "Èrgē, let's go eat. Although Èrgē can only eat rice porridge, Dàgē asked Lin-bó to make the rice porridge using your favorite chicken soup as the base!"

Hearing this, I felt a little touched. This little bit of world traveling had even improved my family circumstances. In the past, I was in a single

parent family. My mother carried all the financial burdens, and just my university fee was a big enough problem in itself. Fortunately, after I graduated, I'd found a great job and life had finally started picking up for the two of us.

Originally, the plan was to keep gunning at it for a few years, save up enough for the pre-payment, and then buy a small house, so that Mom and I would have a place to settle. *Should I be grateful that I hadn't bought it back then?*

"Èrgē?"

Lifting my head, I saw Shujun looking at me worriedly.

I smiled faintly and replied, "It's nothing. Let's go eat, I'm starving."

"Okay!"

After that, Shujun clung to my side the entire day, refusing to go anywhere. And before the sun had even set, that big brother who was supposed to be on a business trip had called five times asking about how I was. It was obvious how close these three siblings were. What a pity that their Xiao Yu was already dead.

I lowered my eyes. I wasn't planning to come clean on this. I had nothing in this world, being a mere student who was still in school. If I lost this family's support, life would be very tough on me, so no matter how unscrupulous I was being, I'd keep hiding this from the siblings.

Besides, that Jiang Shutian was no simple guy. If he found out that a

ghost like me had taken over his younger brother's body, he'd probably be the type who'd harden his heart to shoot me to death.

So I have to keep pretending that I lost my memories! Even if they grow suspicious, as long as I don't confess to the fact that the occupant of this body has changed, I don't believe they'd dare to do anything to this brother of theirs!

"Èrgē, there's going to be a meteor shower tonight. They say that you can see it as long as the light pollution is not too strong, so let's watch the meteor shower in the yard!"

As I was munching on dinner, Shujun happily chirped away, but the glass in my hand shattered from my grip and I was seized by a chill that made even my teeth chatter.

"Gē! Your hand is bleeding." Shujun's scream sounded far in the distance.

The 19th of June, the red meteor shower.

The 20th of June, the black fog.

The 21st of June, morning screams herald the prologue.

"Junjun!" I shouted. "Call Dàgē back! I don't care how, just tell him to come back here right now! Just say I'm dying! Quick!"

Shujun was so freaked out that she was close to tears, and she exclaimed, "Èrgē, don't scare me! I'll call the nurse right now. You

won't die!"

I pulled on her hand, keeping her there, and demanded, "Junjun, do you believe Èrgē? Èrgē is begging you, please tell Dàgē to come home right away."

Shujun only hesitated for a moment before her heart softened, or perhaps she didn't know what else to do, and so she picked up her cell phone to make the call.

"Dàgē, this is Shujun. Can you come home?" Shujun said in a troubled tone of voice, "Èrgē, Èrgē doesn't seem to be doing too well..."

Guess she can't bring herself to say lies like "Èrgē is going to die."

"T-the nurse also says it's not looking good. Really! The nurse doesn't have time to answer the phone. She's checking on Èrgē... Yes, the doctor isn't here yet..."

After talking forever on the phone, Shujun flushed red, handed me the cell phone and said in a tiny voice, "Dàgē doesn't believe me. He says he wants to talk directly with you."

That's because with your skill in lying, even if I really were only eighteen I wouldn't believe you!

Taking the phone, I called him "Dàgē" like any well-behaved little brother should. Given the circumstances, there was nothing to do but go for it.

A deep "yeah" came from the phone, and he admonished me, "Shuyu, you scared Shujun."

"Sorry, I was too impatient." I apologized from the get go then went straight to the heart of the matter. "Dàgē, where are you?"

"I'm in the Arctic, just getting off the plane."

He flew to another continent? I frowned. Now it was even more difficult to ask him to come back.

"Shuyu, be honest with me. What's going on?"

My mind was blank, and I wasn't in any state to come up with a halfway reasonable lie, but as he was still waiting for my explanation, I only could say through clenched teeth, "Dàgē, I had a dream while in my coma."

Fingers crossed that he won't spit tea all over the phone and yell at me for sleeping myself silly.

"Something will happen on the 21st of June, a worldwide disaster! You have to come back to protect Jun... to protect us."

Jiang Shutian exhaled and said helplessly, "Shuyu, that's just a dream."

"Please, Dàgē, just believe me this once. I've never played pranks on you before, have I? For Junjun, please, please come back!" I really hoped he hadn't tricked him before. The "Shuyu" I'd learned about so far seemed to be a good kid.

There was complete silence on the other end of the line.

I forced myself to continue, "Dàgē, if by midnight of the 20th ... No, if you can't get home by 6pm that day, then don't come back at all. It'll be too dangerous."

The closer it got to the twenty-first, the more dangerous it would become. If he came back too late, it was very likely that his plane would crash. So rather than that, it'd be better for him to stay alive somewhere else.

Having said all this, I had already done all I could. If he still refused to come back, then it was something that couldn't be helped. I could only pray that nothing would happen on the 21st. In the event that something really were to happen – this time I don't want to live through it!

"Okay, I'm coming back. You and Shujun sit tight at home. Be good and don't go anywhere."

Unexpectedly, Jiang Shutian actually agreed. It seemed like he was the type of big brother to dote on and spoil his younger siblings. Of course, this was assuming he wasn't just doing this to humor me and didn't plan to come home at all.

"If possible, bring back some medical supplies, like antibiotics. It's best if you have some guns as well..."

My voice grew smaller and smaller as I spoke. It was just too strange for words like these to be coming out of the mouth of an eighteen-year

old boy like Jiang Shuyu, and the more I said the more easily he'd become suspicious of me.

Especially since I had no idea as to whether something would actually happen on the 21st. I didn't want these two siblings to be suspicious of me, but there was no way I could let this go without giving them at least a warning. Since doing something was better than doing nothing at all, in the end, I added, "In my dream, I saw that the next few days are going to be very dangerous. There might be injuries, and only guns can provide protection."

He was silent for a long time before he made a sound of "mm," and only after many repetitions of "take care of yourself" did he hang up. Breathing a sigh of relief, I realized I was drenched in sweat and my entire body felt very weak, so I immediately drank a bit more chicken soup to hydrate myself.

After dinner, I asked Shujun, "Junjun, are there any markets and department stores around here?"

Shujun nodded, replying, "There's a department store nearby with a supermarket in the basement."

"Then let's go there right now. Do we have a minivan around here?" Actually, I really wanted to ask if they had a large truck, but given that they probably didn't, it was better to save the effort of asking.

Her eyes widened, and she said in a disapproving voice, "Gē, where are you thinking of going? You can't go out yet!"

"I have to go. I need to buy a lot of things." I blinked innocently, copying what she had said earlier, "Dàgē gave permission."

Shujun frowned, but I stubbornly stood my ground, and she ended up agreeing to it. "All right, I'll ask Lin-bó to drive."

"Shujun, how much money do you have?" I was a little nervous — what I was planning to accomplish was going to be a true shopping spree!

"I only have a few thousand." Seeing my troubled expression, Shujun laughed and reminded me, "Dàgē always goes abroad, so he's given you ATM and credit cards. All my pocket money comes from you, Èrgē! I'll go get your wallet. You can't use my pocket money!"

Shujun seemed in be in a great mood. Even if her Èrgē went nuts, as long as a woman could shop, they would still be over the moon.

Being an invalid, it took a lot of effort before we arrived at the supermarket inside the department store. I'd found out that we had a basement and there wasn't much in there, and immediately decided that we would spend the entire night shuttling goods from the department store to our house.

"Lin-bó, take all this rice to the cashier and pay for it first."

The moment we entered the supermarket, I pointed at a mountain of packaged rice.

Lin-bó and Shujun were stunned, and Lin-bó asked uncertainly,

"Young Master, are you serious?"

"Absolutely!" I said resolutely.

Lin-bó thought for a moment, and said, "If Young Master wishes to purchase in such a large quantity, I will negotiate with the store and have them to deliver the goods back home. But we may need to pay a little extra for transportation costs. Would that be fine, Young Master?"

"I don't care about the money, but they have to deliver it by tonight!"

Lin-bó nodded, and the result of his negotiations was that the store was willing to have someone help move the goods, and there would even be a truck to transport the goods back. This only came to around a thousand. They were probably delighted to see a "bulk purchaser" like me.

So I fearlessly pointed at various things and told them to load them all onto the truck!

Instant noodles, meat jerky, canned goods, chocolate, sweets, gallons of water, drinks, toilet paper, batteries... An endless stream of critical resources were all swept onto the truck, and after a moment's thought, even pads were packed onto the truck by the box. I'd never need to use it in this lifetime, but Shujun would.

"Èr- Èrgē, isn't this too much? It's probably enough to last ten years."

Shujun followed after me with wide eyes and a slackened jaw. Any desire to shop had long gone, replaced instead by astonishment.

There were people pointing at us already, but I couldn't care less. As

long as we could survive, a little embarrassment now was nothing. Rather, the supermarket manager was anxiously asking whether we could pay the bill first so it would be more convenient for them to deliver the goods. Frankly, I thought this was just an excuse, that he was afraid that I wouldn't be able to pay, and all this effort would be for nothing.

I took out my credit card, starting to get a little concerned that the limit wouldn't be enough. But after swiping the card, he carried over the receipt with a thousand watt smile, so my credit limit really did seem sufficient. I glanced at the bill, which came to over three hundred odd thousand, so this was probably a card without any upper limit on the credit. There was no way Jiang Shutian was something as simple as the boss of a small design company.

After paying the bill, I said offhandedly, "Come, let's continue upstairs."

"What? We're still buying things?" Shujun was shocked to the point where she was a little dizzy. She was at a huge loss as to what to do. We shopped our way up floor by floor, and I picked out durable clothes at ten apiece each time, not forgetting other things like thermal clothing and duvets as well; I bought them like they were disposables.

Luckily, we were able to find a store selling military goods and a pharmacy on one of the floors, and I got all sorts of high-quality flashlights, helmets, and even military boots. Just knives alone I'd bought in the dozens. In the pharmacy, it was vitamins, bandages, anti-inflammatory medicines, and the like. I cleared out all their stock in one go.

Shujun said nervously, “Èr- Èrgē, this is too much. You’re always saying that Dàgē has to work hard to earn money and that we should save more.”

This made me hesitate. If nothing really happened, then all this would have been a waste of money. Even if we slowly used up the goods, there weren’t that many people in this family, so there was a limit to how much we could use up. Besides, there were some things that we’d never need, like the knives.

But putting it another way, even if Jiang Shutian wasn’t as wealthy as I thought, it was unlikely that the entire family would go bankrupt just because we had used up a million dollars. In contrast, these one million dollars-worth of goods would be absolutely critical to survival after the 21st, so comparatively speaking, this one million was well spent!

With everything cleared up, I continued shopping, and even on the way home I felt like we hadn’t gotten quite enough food yet, so we bought up everything from the convenience stores on our way back. It was only when I was so tired I almost couldn’t catch my breath and I saw Shujun worried to the point of tears that I was finally willing to go home. This body of mine would really need a fair bit of time to recuperate.

“Gē, Gē, look!” Shujun opened the car window and pointed excitedly outside. Lin-bó also considerately parked the car to one side to let her safely stick her head out to look.

At her repeated requests, I reluctantly lifted my head to look up at the

sky. In an age like this where it was almost impossible to see the stars, the entire night sky was actually filled with meteor showers. It was magnificent, beautiful enough to take away one's breath.

I still remembered the news the next day describing this event: streaming rose lights so beautiful that once you had seen them, you'd die without any regrets afterwards.

F*** that "dying without any regrets" shit.

Streaming rose lights.

The red meteor shower.

Footnotes

¹ “-bo”: an honorific in this case used to refer to older men, usually over the age of 50.

Chapter #2: The Black Fog Unveils

It was only after all the supplies had been piled into the basement and some of the excess tossed into the kitchen that I felt more at ease.

With these supplies, as long as Jiang Shutian could make it back and protect these supplies, this family would be able to survive.

When we had gotten back home, the nurse was so angry she was about to explode. But I insisted on making sure all the supplies were taken care of before I was willing to rest, so her face transformed into that of man-eating tigress as she worked with Lin-bó to force me into the bathroom to clean up. Then, she ordered me to lie on the bed so she could check my various vital stats.

The moment I hit the bed, I was so exhausted that I passed out until the next day. By the time I woke up and looked at the clock, it was already past noon.

Getting up, I called the nurse and Lin-bó to take me to the bathroom so I could do my business and tidy up.

Confronted with an unfamiliar male body, I was still fairly calm for a woman who had turned into a man. After all, what hadn't I seen to date? But the nurse was surprisingly shy, perhaps because she was still young, not even thirty judging from her looks. I, on the other hand, had the body of a fine, young lad. There simply wasn't a woman in this world who hadn't thought of gobbling up a delectable young man!

After washing up, I was planning to eat a little something, ideally

topped off by some more chicken broth as well. *Although it's a little too late to start nursing this body back to health...*

"Xiao Yu."

I lifted my head. It was Uncle and Auntie. Yesterday, Shujun said that they had gone out to meet up with a friend, and by the time we got back, they were already asleep. We had even specially requested the transporters to carry on their business quietly to avoid waking them up.

"Good afternoon, Uncle, Auntie."

I gauged the two of them. They looked only forty-odd or so, and Auntie seemed like she hadn't even hit her forties yet, but maybe they were simply really good at maintaining themselves. There was simply no way they hadn't reached their forties yet. *This Uncle and his dead brother might have had a bit of an age gap.*

The two seemed really bookish, which was really bad news. I'd sincerely hoped that this Uncle was a muscle man, and it was best if he had trained in judo, taekwondo and martial arts, and was well versed in sword play and shooting or something. Sadly, while my dream Uncle was quite a hefty man, the reality was that he was a skinny bag of bones.

Auntie asked, puzzled, "Xiao Yu, why are there so many things in the kitchen? Did you buy all of that?"

I gave a nod, replying, "Yesterday, I went with Junjun to buy some things. I'm not sure what came over me to make me buy so much."

Thankfully, they hadn't seen the basement. Otherwise, they wouldn't believe me even if I said I'd gone stir crazy.

Auntie reassured me gently, "It doesn't matter if you bought a lot. None of these are perishable, so we can just go through them slowly."

"Will Uncle and Auntie go out today?" *If so, I'll immediately faint on the spot and force them to stay to look after me.*

"Of course not," Auntie said a little apologetically, "Yesterday was just because a good friend of ours we hadn't seen in a while was leaving, so we just had to say goodbye. Otherwise, Uncle and I will never leave at a time like this. I still need to make sure you're eating right!"

Her eyes reddened, and she said fretfully, "Just look at you, you're nothing but skin and bones."

Uncle snapped with a tone of disagreement, "Come now, what's there to cry about? Xiao Yu's awake and the doc's already said that there shouldn't be many aftereffects either. Just give him some time, and he'll be back to the same old Xiao Yu."

"That's right." Auntie quickly hid her sorrowful expression and grasped my hand, telling me, "Quick, go eat! Even Junjun refused to eat without you awake!"

I complied with a smile. When we got to the dining room, the entire table was covered with dishes. However, all the food was stewed so soft that it was on the point of disintegration, probably so it'd be easier for me to eat.

I silently ate the food. Although I wanted to eat more and quickly recover my strength, this body couldn't handle it, taking in far less than what a healthy youngster should be eating. But if I forced anymore down, I was worried I'd throw up, so I could only give up and put down my bowl and chopsticks to wait for the others to eat their fill for a bit.

"There's something I want to say to everyone."

Everyone looked up at me.

"No one should go out today. And tonight, everyone should sleep in separate rooms." I looked at Uncle and Auntie. "Including Uncle and Auntie. Also, everyone needs to lock their door before sleeping. Make sure that you push something to block the door as well."

At that, Lin-bó, the nurse, and Shujun took it relatively well—they had already seen me shopping like crazy last night, so these words couldn't shock them. However, Uncle and Auntie looked absolutely astonished.

"What for?" Uncle asked as he set down his bowl and chopsticks, looking a little stern even. That said, he wasn't the head of the family. After all, the most authoritative person in this family had to be Jiang Shutian!

I could only use my dream as an excuse, but this only tickled Uncle and Auntie to the point where they didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"It's fine." Shujun immediately took my side, saying, "Dàgē allowed it."

Since the twenty-first is tomorrow already, everyone listen to Èrgē!”

Like I thought, Jiang Shutian held absolute power. Just one line of “Dàgē allowed it” was enough to make it the word of law.

Everyone agreed to it without any other questions or comments. Judging from their expressions, perhaps even Jiang Shujun didn’t believe me, but they were more than willing to accommodate the wishes of a grievously injured young man who had just woken up from a coma.

This family is truly worth putting in extra effort to protect, it’s just that...

After the meal, I walked around to check the surroundings and asked Shujun a bunch of questions. This house was much better than I had imagined; it turned out that we were in the suburbs of the capital, where every house was standalone. Each house even had its own courtyard and walls.

All the windows in this house were sealed off with iron bars, probably as an anti-theft measure, and there were two sets of doors making up the front entrance of the house. The inner doors were even made of pure stainless-steel.

This set-up is just incredible!

We even had a fair bit of supplies on hand, so if Jiang Shutian could just make it back, then we’d be ready for anything the world could throw at us.

Thinking of that imposing Dàgē, I couldn't resist calling to ask where he was right now, but the call didn't connect. *Is he still on the plane?* I really hoped he wasn't just deceiving me, and thus refused to answer the phone.

"Gē."

I turned to see Shujun standing on veranda looking at me, her face a little pale.

"What's the matter?"

My heart sank when she pointed outside of the veranda. Although I knew that all of this would be coming when I had seen the red meteor shower, I had always carried a thread of hope, thinking that what came next might be different... but hope always ends in disappointment.

Shujun pushed me out to the veranda. When I looked into the distance, I saw a layer of faint, black fog clouding the horizon. Normally, no one would be bothered by this. After all, there wasn't anything strange about such changes in this heavily polluted world. Half the time, the cause would probably be man-made. Even sea water could turn mustard yellow.

But after I had described the impending disaster of the twenty-first, Shujun had become much more sensitive to the possibility, so she was unable to remain calm in the face of this black fog.

I never imagined that the black fog would start spreading so soon. *Is it because we are in a different area?* I remembered that back then it wasn't until six or seven in the evening that I started noticing something was wrong.

Thinking back, it was probably because I had been working until six or seven before I finally stepped out of the office building, which was why I had discovered the strangeness so late. *It seems the fog had started spreading much earlier.*

I started getting a bit worried about the flight. It was only 3pm in the afternoon, but I couldn't get through to Jiang Shutian's cell phone.

"Junjun, give Dàgē a call every half an hour."

Hearing that, Shujun paled even more and nodded vigorously. She even ran to make a call immediately, but there was still no answer.

"What's this?" Auntie came onto the veranda holding a bowl of chicken broth. She looked a little puzzled by the distant black fog, but she didn't seem too bothered as she remarked, "The air pollution has been really bad recently. Come now, Xiao Yu, have a little more broth."

Although I wasn't hungry at all, I still obediently drank it all. I needed to regain however much strength I could.

At six in the evening, we still couldn't contact Jiang Shutian. At this point, the black fog was so dense even Uncle and Auntie felt that something was off. They even dialed the emergency number, 110, to ask about what was going on, but they couldn't get through. The lines

were all busy.

"Xiao Yu, what's happening?"

During dinner, Uncle finally blurted out the question.

I calmly said, "Listen, everyone sleeps in a separate room tonight. Lock your door and block it. Tomorrow morning, if someone hasn't left their room, the people outside need to first shout and get an answer before opening the door. If no one responds, do NOT open the door!" Uncle obviously found this all to be very strange and asked in a tone of incomprehension, "Why is it that we shouldn't open the door if we don't get a response? What's wrong with the person inside?"

Uncle looked at me, alarmed, and even the others were focused on my words now.

"Whatever is inside might not be human anymore," I replied lightly. Everyone's expressions took a 180 degree turn. Uncle opened his mouth to ask another question, but I cut in before he could even get a word in, begging them, "Look, just listen to what I say, okay? It's just for one day, and if nothing happens tomorrow, I'll make sure to apologize to everyone. But for now, just listen to what I say?"

Uncle started, but in the end he just nodded without saying anything more.

"After the twenty-first, lock all the windows and doors, don't go out, absolutely do not let anyone in. Don't switch on the lights at night, don't make any loud noises, and best not let anyone know that there

are people in this house."

But what next? Looking at this family, I didn't know what more to do. There were only two men here, but while Uncle still looked to be in his prime, Lin-bó looked like he was pushing close to his sixties. *How much combat power could they have?*

"Anyway, just don't go out," I concluded helplessly.

Uncle chuckled wryly, "We can't spend our entire life locked up here, though?"

"The rest can wait until Dàgē is back."

The moment "Dàgē" was mentioned, everyone nodded in agreement. *Are they just that gullible or does everyone think that, even if the plane dropped from the sky, Jiang Shutian could still sprout a pair of wings and fly back?*

I was exasperated, but I could see where they were coming from. It hadn't even been three days since I woke up, and while I'd only seen Jiang Shutian on the first day, to say nothing about my still-blurry vision then, his air of authority had already made a deep impression on me. So for these people who had been living with Jiang Shutian for at least a dozen or so years, they must be bursting with their confidence in him!

Seeing these people with identical looks of "let's wait for Dàgē to get back," I grew increasingly worried. *Jiang Shutian might not be able to make it back!* I could only continue passing on what knowledge I had.

"If you see anyone who looks odd and aggressive, immediately strike at their head. You have to be sure that you beat the head to a pulp. Don't just go lightly tapping at it."

Everyone stared at me with sheet-white faces. They probably could guess what was going on. After all, this had been in so many movies before. Now that I thought about it, they were almost prophetic, but when reality struck, it was much more brutal and terrifying than fiction. It was hard to say which was the made-up story anymore—movies or reality.

After we finished the meal, Junjun, Uncle, Auntie, and I sat in the living room to chat. I learned a fair bit about Jiang Shuyu. It turned out that he was a miniature version of Jiang Shutian—the head honcho in the family was Jiang Shutian, but the second most influential person actually wasn't Uncle, but Jiang Shuyu!

Uncle explained with some embarrassment that he and Auntie were always out on archaeological studies for most of the year and were rarely at home, so they had no way of managing the household. However, Auntie's and Junjun's expressions completely betrayed him. This Uncle was a good-for-nothing, carefree guy whose brains were only stuffed with archaeology. He even needed to be taken care of! In the past, his older brother had taken care of him, and when his older brother passed away, his nephew ended up continuing to take care of him.

Hearing that, I became even more troubled.

We ended up chatting the whole time, and because my condition was very poor, I soon grew so exhausted that I could barely keep my eyes open. Although I knew I should preserve my strength, I couldn't tear myself away from the conversation and just wanted it to keep going. It wasn't until it was past ten pm when I really couldn't take it anymore that I chased everyone back to their rooms. I made sure that each person had a box of drinks, food, first aid kit and the like, just in case.

I didn't move away from each person's door until after I heard them lock the doors and move things to block the doorway.

When it was Shujun's turn, she bit her lip and refused to lock the door, asking, "Gē, can't I sleep with you? You're not doing well and need someone to take care of you!"

"No," I said jokingly. "If you were to bully me, I won't be able to win with my body like this."

Hearing that, Shujun's face paled but she managed to muster a smile and nodded. "That's true. Then I'm locking the door!"

Finally, there were just Lin-bó and me left. Lin-bó helped me move a study desk to the door, leaving just enough space for him to slip out of the door.

For some reason, Lin-bó hesitated just before he left, turning his head to look back at me.

"Young Master, my son and daughter-in-law are in the city. If

something happens, can we bring them over?"

I frowned. Honestly, I wasn't comfortable with doing that. If Jiang Shutian were here, there wouldn't be any problem in taking in those two, but currently, aside from Lin-bó, the only other guy was Uncle. If Lin-bó's son and daughter-in-law came, then they could very well take over this place like cuckoos hijacking a nest.

"Let's wait until tomorrow. Maybe my dream won't come true."

I sent Lin-bó away by delaying my decision, even though I knew all too well that if they didn't come over tonight, then they'd never will. Lin-bó nodded as he left, not wanting to press the point. Perhaps it was because he still didn't fully believe in my story, which was only natural. After all, life had been fine until now. Most people would not be able to accept being suddenly thrust into a situation like what happens in movies.

Next was a grueling battle—even though the desk was right by the door, with only enough space to open the door a crack, I was on a wheelchair. It was no easy task to push this heavy desk flush against the closed door.

Finally, after becoming drenched in sweat from head-to-toe was I finished dealing with the bedroom door. After a short break, I took a dozen odd belts from the wardrobe. This was really more than enough. In my previous life, I'd really never used something like belts more than a few times.

After a final surge of effort to climb onto the bed, I was panting so

badly that my chest felt like it was going to explode. I had to rest for a long while before I had the energy to continue moving. Then, I bound both my legs securely to the railing of the hospital bed using the belts. After some thought, I also tied my left hand, though there was nothing I could do about my right.

I quietly lay on the bed, unsure of when the moment of the final judgment would arrive. I waited but got bored. I grew sleepy but didn't want to go to sleep just like that. So I turned my head left and right, trying to find something interesting to distract me.

The moment I looked to my left, I was instantly captivated. There were a few photo frames there, with photos of Jiang Shuyu, Jiang Shujun, the imposing Dàgē, Jiang Shutian, Uncle, Auntie, and an unknown couple. I didn't even need to guess to know that they were the biological parents of this body.

If the entire family were here, then perhaps there really would be some meaning in living. Even if I wasn't Jiang Shuyu, if I stayed around long enough, then I'd become Jiang Shuyu, wouldn't I?

Such a pity...

The person least likely to make it past the twenty-first would be me. The moment the judgment descended, weak people had the hardest time surviving. Right now, I didn't even have the strength to stand, so how would it be possible for me to survive?

I'd originally thought that the Heavens had mercifully given me a second chance in life, letting me live a new life in this peaceful, albeit

mundane, world. It wouldn't matter even if it were a boring life.

But then I discovered that the Heavens were going to cruelly make me experience this once again...

The apocalypse.

Originally, my plan was that Jiang Shutian would be able to make it home in time, then I would resolutely kill myself before midnight of the twenty first and save myself from this torture. Yet, he couldn't make it back in time, or perhaps his promise to me back then was a lie, and he simply hadn't planned on coming back. However, it was just as likely that the plane had crashed, and I had doomed him to his death. I strongly felt that it was the last. I had some kind of feeling that if Jiang Shutian had made a promise, then he would come back. He would never blow off his younger brother, so he was probably dead because of me?

So, to repay my debt to him as well as to Shujun, who had been taking care of me for the past few days, I had to try my best to survive no matter what. If I could survive, I might be able to protect Shujun using my past experience, and pray that Jiang Shutian was still alive.

It was about time. I looked to the floor-length window and, as expected, the black fog had started creeping in. Even if you sealed the doors and windows beforehand, it was pointless. Nothing could stop this black fog. This was the same no matter where you went. I glanced at the clock. It read 12:01. *Guess it's the twenty first already.*

Lying on the bed, I quietly waited. The black fog first spread across the entire floor, then slowly climbed up until it was level with the top of the bed, and then it started surging across the surface of the bed. I watched with my eyes wide open. Even after ten times of experiencing this, there was simply no way I could ever get used to it. The first jab of pain came from the soles of my feet, like they were being burned, but I didn't yank my feet back and just let them roast. Next, the black fog bit into my pinkie, hurting the entire finger like it was being chewed on, but this wasn't the end to the agony. Different types of pain started assaulting all four limbs—I was cut, burned, frozen, crushed...

Pain!

There is only pain!

I practically tasted every single possible pain in the world, and there was nothing I could do except hurt. My mouth fell open. I moaned, tears pouring uncontrollably from my eyes.

The agony made me unable to breathe even though I had strained open my mouth and jaw to their widest, and my chest felt like I was suffocating...

I won't make it, can't make it... I...

Will turn into an aberrant.



Gē...

Xiao Yu, Xiao Yu!

Èrgē... Answer me, Gē... Sob... Èrgē...

"Èrgē!"

My eyes sprang open and I gasped, my chest expanding and contracting so violently I felt like I was nearly about to burst. For a fair bit of time, I could only pant forcefully, listening to the wailing outside the door.

"Junjun..."

I tried shouting but could only make a whisper so soft that even I myself could barely hear it. My body was weak to the point where I couldn't move, and the sheets under me were completely soaked with sweat. I had to be dehydrated, and if I didn't quickly replenish the water, I would really die!

"Jun..."

This time, I couldn't even manage two syllables. *Shit, I didn't die during the moment of judgment but instead will die from dehydration.* Even I myself found the entire thing deplorable.

"Gē, Gē! I don't care anymore, I'm going to open the door now. I'm opening it!"

"All right, let's do it!" Uncle actually went along with her nonsense, completely forgetting what I had told them. *Didn't I tell you not to open the door without a response?*

From the door came the sound of the lock being opened, and next came the sound of crashing against the door. Once, twice, and with a big "bang" on the third, the desk holding the door shut was knocked awry, and the three of them rushed in, looking at me with panic. I looked back, so dehydrated that I couldn't even squeeze out tears, and mouthed silently, "Water..."

Auntie rushed forward and held a bowl to my lips. It was chicken broth again.

I drank three whole big bowls of chicken broth, to the point where I was almost sick from it, before I could finally manage to ask for a glass of clear water to rinse my mouth. The oiliness clinging to my mouth was unbearable, but after drinking the chicken broth, my body felt much better. Ten minutes ago, I'd felt like I was going to die, but now I was pretty sure I could survive.

"What about Lin-bó and the nurse?" I could only count three people. I already had a bad feeling about it.

The three of them looked at each other, before finally, Uncle spoke for them. "The nurse was collapsed in the kitchen. We called her but she didn't respond, so I guess she might be dead. We didn't dare to touch her. Don't know about Lin-bó, we haven't been to his room yet. We went to the kitchen to get the soup before coming straight to you." Hearing that the nurse had collapsed in the kitchen, my expression

darkened. *Why the hell was she in the kitchen?* She must have ignored my instructions to stay in the room and ran off to the kitchen in the middle of the night, and there she encountered the moment of judgment.

"Why'd you tie up yourself like this?" Uncle scolded me as he undid the belt around my hand, "Look, your whole wrist is chafed."

Because I was worried that you people wouldn't listen to me and would rush in even without getting a response. Why else would I go to such pains to tie myself up?

In the end, you guys really did rush in. I had to admire my own powers of prediction, but there wasn't much point in complaining about this. If they hadn't come in, I might really have died in here. I slowly sat up, and although everyone looked like they wanted to ask me to lie back down, this really wasn't the time to be resting. There were a million things we had to deal with, as soon as possible.

"Uncle, move some stuff to block the kitchen entrance. No matter what, don't touch the nurse, and try not to make any sounds. If she moves, come back immediately!"

Uncle nodded and instantly moved off to do as told without even a question or comment. It seemed like this body of mine really was the second-in-command in this family. Even Uncle, who was my senior in years, leaped to obey without question.

"Then I'll find Lin-bó," Shujun said immediately.

"Don't bother," I replied tiredly, "You guys were shouting so loudly,

and you even bashed through the door, yet he still hasn't come out. You won't get a response. You're better off getting one of those baseball bats there."

I pointed as I spoke to the three baseball bats by the door, which we had bought from the department store.

I had guessed that even if they hadn't gotten any response, Shujun and the other two simply couldn't let their Èrgē be and would definitely barge into the room. I also had no way of guaranteeing that the belts could stop "me," so I had left some weapons there for them to defend themselves in case of emergencies.

"Xiao Yu." Auntie picked up the baseball bat as told, but seeing how uncomfortable she was handling it, I was suspicious whether she would even be able to use it.

"What's going on? That black fog yesterday..."

Here, she shivered, and even Shujun paled.

"Will that fog come again?" Shujun asked in a shaking voice, "You're not telling me that even tonight—"

"No, it won't come tonight," I hastily interjected.

Just once a year. I didn't say it out loud. After all, I didn't even know if we could survive for one year. There wasn't any need to tell them beforehand to make them feel worse.

Shujun and Auntie heaved huge sighs of relief. I was extremely sympathetic. That pain was really worse than death, and many people in the past had chosen to commit suicide after learning that they had to experience that pain once a year.

Suddenly, the sound of intense fighting broke out in the distance and a man yelled. *It sounds like Uncle...*

My heart sank. *So something happened after all?* But we had to send Uncle out. If the nurse came over, then that may spell the end for all of us.

"Darling!" Auntie immediately ran out. Shujun stood there for a moment, stunned, then hurried after her.

I couldn't stop them and could only yell, "Hit the head! You have to destroy the head! Junjun, don't be nice, don't be afraid! You have to protect Uncle and Auntie."

Auntie had dashed off far into the distance, but Shujun stopped, her pretty face startling pale, but she still nodded at me and closed the door. If this door was locked, then it would be impossible to open it from the outside without a key. The little missy could still think about protecting me at a time like this...

I have to do my best as well!

Before the moment of judgment, I was pretty sure I wouldn't be able to stand without a few more days of rest. But after the moment of judgment, it was hard to say.

I strained to twist my waist, straightened my spine, sat on the bed, set my feet against the floor, and first tried to move my toes. After I was sure I could move, I took a deep breath and stood right up, but I immediately groaned and almost sat back down on the bed. Thankfully, I managed to remain standing upright by just the tiniest of margins.

Taking slow, deliberate steps, I shuffled to the door where I picked up the third baseball bat and pulled open the door. Just as I was able to move over to help, I saw Auntie and Shujun coming over, with Uncle supported between the two of them. Not far behind them, that nurse headed our way in a strange, contorted way. Fortunately, she wasn't moving too fast as her limbs didn't seem very coordinated.

Half of Uncle's body was stained blood-red all over. I couldn't tell where his injuries were. He shouted at the two women, "Go! Darling, Junjun, run! I've already been bitten, there's no helping me! Go!"

The two women's faces were pale, but they refused to let go. In turn, Uncle started struggling, wanting to push them away.

"Bring him over!" I yelled, "Uncle, you're fine, trust me!"

Hearing that, Uncle stilled and stopped struggling. The three of them made a concerted effort to run away, but it seemed Uncle had injured his right leg and could only drag that leg forward, so progress couldn't be anything but slow.

I approached them, my faltering pace not much better than Uncle's with the injured leg.

Seeing my current state, Uncle shouted urgently, "Xiao Yu, go back to your room!"

I ignored him, looking instead at Shujun, and said, "Junjun, don't look back. Keep going."

By this time, the nurse was only a few steps behind them. Junjun nodded, obediently keeping her head forward, and focused on hauling Uncle forward.

I moved in front of the three of them, who remained oblivious to the fact that the nurse was currently lunging in mid-air at them, her ten fingers double their original length, their joints swollen like small balls. Her mouth was wide open to the point where the edges of her mouth had ripped open, every one of her teeth sharp and pointed and even dripping fresh blood.

I leaned to one side to let them past, then swung outward with the baseball bat as hard as I could. The bat connected with the nurse's skull, knocking her from mid-air straight to the ground.

I looked down coldly at the nurse. She was clinging to her head, keening, but I brought down the bat again in one sweep, thinking to burst her brains, but her skull was harder than I expected, or perhaps I was simply too weak, and the bat could only make a small dent in her head.

"Èrgē, come back, there's another one!" Shujun screamed.

What? I lifted my head. There really was another figure there. This fellow's movements were even slower, so he was still at the other end of the corridor, plodding his way forward one step at a time. But although he was moving so slowly, I felt he was even scarier than the nurse. *What the hell is with that mountain of muscle?*

Even though his face was swollen with muscles, I could tell that he wasn't Lin-bó. *Where did he come from? Has the front door been opened already?*

With no time to care about busting open the nurse's head, I immediately turned to leave, but something gripped my ankle, and before I could react, I fell to the ground. *The damned nurse is actually holding onto my ankle!* I kicked at her wildly, and even used the bat to pummel her face to prevent her from biting my leg.

I really was too weak. I couldn't get rid of her no matter how much I kicked. Although the bat had broken a number of her teeth, this damage wasn't enough to make her let go.

The muscle man was drawing closer. He was only wearing a pair of pants, with the lower half ripped apart by bulging muscles, transforming them into something closer to boxers. Every muscle on his torso was larger than a basketball, to the point where he was close to losing even the basic form of a human. The ground shook with every step that he took.

He was very slow. If we really wanted to run away, it wouldn't be a problem. But if we didn't want to give up this house, then he would be even harder to deal with than the nurse!

"Ah—!"

Pain suddenly seized my ankle. *The stupid bitch actually tried to crush my ankle!* I frantically hit her wrist with the baseball bat, again and again, and she kept giving hair-raising shrieks as her hand became deformed, but still she refused to let go. A throbbing pain started from my ankle.

"Hyah!"

A baseball bat slammed down repeatedly against the nurse's skull. I started. Within a few blows, even a pinkish white material started flying out, each blow much more powerful than mine by far.

"Let go! Let go! Let go of my brother—"

Shujun hammered at the nurse's skull like a frenzied woman, crying all the while as tears and snot streamed from her eyes and nose. There wasn't a trace of the pretty girl left.

As for the nurse, she was beaten to a pulp and not far from death's door. Finally, I was able to kick away her hand and crawl to my feet, all the while bearing with the pain in my ankle. Then, I grabbed the crazed Shujun and rushed into the room.

"Quick, block the door!"

I pushed the study desk against the door again, but this wasn't enough. Cupboards, sofas, the bed—everyone acted like they'd lost their minds as they frantically crammed everything moveable in the

room against the door, but I really wasn't sure this would be enough. Judging from that muscle man's appearance, he was obviously the power-type aberrant. *Would these things really be enough?*

What should we do if they aren't?

Chapter #3: Aberrants

The four of us leaned against the blockade, expecting violent pounding to start at any moment. I looked back at the window with the iron bars, but there were no tools on hand with which we could use to break them – the chainsaw we had bought at the department store had been stored in the basement. We had no way of getting out.

"G-Gē, did I kill the nurse? I-is she alive?"

Shujun's entire body was shaking like a leaf in the wind, and bits of red and white stuff were even stuck to her delicate hands. She hadn't noticed at all.

I calmly replied, "Don't be silly, did she look alive?"

Hearing that, Shujun calmed down a little, but continued uneasily, "But she can move."

"That's not a person! You didn't kill her either – she's still moving out there! I said that you have to beat the brain to a pulp to kill them, but you only broke her skull, you haven't pounded it to a pulp." *It is just that, with her skull bust open like that, she probably doesn't have much longer to live either.*

Shujun made an affirmative "uhn" sound, her expression finally relaxing a little.

No matter how long we waited, there was a distinct lack of pounding on the door. Instead, there came the nurse's wail and some bone-

chilling cracking sounds, followed by the sound of chewing...

Everyone's faces were pale, but I was inwardly over the moon. If Muscle Man ate the nurse, he would be so full he would need time to digest her, so we were safe for the time being.

Here, I slumped to the ground, completely drained of strength and with a burgeoning headache coming on.

Everyone else followed suit and collapsed to the floor. Uncle looked particularly bad, his face white from the blood loss.

Seeing his sorry state, I forced myself to crawl up, but when I stood, my ankle hurt so much my face twisted into a grimace for a moment. I prayed none of the bones were broken.

I found the medicine box and started to help Uncle disinfect and bandage the wound with quick, precise movements. I was very used to doing this in the past – after all, I'd been at it for almost ten years, so even if I wasn't a nurse to start with, I was at least half way there by now.

Come to think of it, it really was incredible that I had survived in times like these for a good ten years.

Auntie had originally wanted to help out, but when she saw how fast and professionally I was handling it, she gave up the notion.

"Xiao Yu, be honest with your uncle," Uncle asked, his face a ghastly shade of white. "Will I become a zombie?"

I shook my head. "Getting bitten is fine. You'll only turn into an aberrant if you die."

Uncle evidently didn't believe me as he pressed on, "Really? You're not lying to me?"

I immediately said without thinking, "I'll never risk Junjun's life."

Hearing that, Uncle breathed out and Auntie was so relieved that she started crying.

I, on the other hand, was astonished. *When did I start caring so much about Jiang Shujun? She is Jiang Shuyu's little sister, not mine!*

And there was Jiang Shutian too. Even now, I still couldn't believe that he was dead, and somehow felt that he wouldn't die. *What is with this? How can I be so confident in a person I've known for less than a day?*

Is it because this is Jiang Shuyu's body that his emotions are affecting me?

Dropping my gaze, my hands were carefully wrapping up Uncle's wounds, but if it was the past me, if there was a heavily injured person trapped in this kind of environment, I'd kill him, no hesitation!

Although being bitten wouldn't change you into an aberrant, the average person died very easily from the bites. Infection was the biggest problem, and right now we only had some generic anti-

inflammatory drugs on hand and no antibiotics or the like.

We should at the very least tie up this man in case he suddenly keels over and dies, but when I saw Auntie and Junjun – Auntie, who was giving Uncle water, and Shujun, who had cut out a piece of her clothing, wetted it, and started wiping the blood from Uncle's face – I couldn't say it.

I dragged my heavy feet to the door, barely squeezing through to find a spot that wasn't blocked by the barricade, and pressed my ear against the door, listening to the outside. After a long while, there was still no sound, and only then did I comfortably sit on the ground and start bandaging my ankle.

Since it was already ten years since the beginning of the previous apocalypse, my memories from back then were a bit fuzzy, but I could still vaguely remember some bigger things. As I recalled, during this period, aberrants still needed a fairly long time to digest their food, especially when they had eaten an entire aberrant, so we should at least have one to two days of buffer time.

"Gē, don't bandage it just yet. I'll wash it with some water and rub on some disinfectant. You've got a lot of scratches on your foot." As Shujun spoke, she tore off a strip of cloth – her clothes were all tattered. Then, she couldn't help but add, "Gē, bear with it, it's going to hurt."

I nodded. Even though these scratches shouldn't get infected, going by the state of my body at the moment, it was better safe than sorry.

Seeing Shujun earnestly wiping away at my feet with tears in her eyes, her face all filthy with grime, my heart suddenly started aching. This alien feeling scared me so much I almost jumped in the air.

"Gē?" Shujun anxiously looked at me and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing!" I hastily assured the three who were starting to get anxious about me, hesitated, then asked, "Junjun, Uncle, and Auntie, do you think I've changed a lot?"

Shujun blinked. "Aside from the fact that you knew this would happen, you haven't changed much. Why do you ask?"

Haven't changed much...

I was silent for a long while before I could squeeze out a smile, speaking with a lightness I didn't feel in my heart, "When I was unconscious, I had a very long dream, almost ten years long. And in my dream, I wasn't like this, I had become someone else, so I was thinking whether I had changed into that person."

Shujun shook her head. "You really haven't changed much. Just that you've become more reliable now, Èrgē, more like Dàgē."

Haven't changed much... No wonder none of them got suspicious of me, but I wasn't the slightest bit happy about it. I closed my eyes in pain.
Could it be that I'm really not Guan Weijun? Was that life all just a dream, and I am still Jiang Shuyu?

"Gē!" Shujun asked, concerned, "What's wrong? Do you have a

headache?"

"A bit." I forced a smile. "Get me a painkiller?"

"Okay."

After taking the meds, I shut my eyes to rest, also taking the opportunity to comb over my memories. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't remember anything relating to Jiang Shuyu. I just remembered that I was Guan Weijun, I remembered those ten years, I remembered him...

"Gē."

I opened my eyes to see Shujun looking at me worriedly. "Does your head still hurt?"

"No, I was just resting my eyes."

Now's not the time to be thinking about that – survival is more important right now! I stood up. After my ankle was bound tightly by the bandages, it still hurt but no longer hindered my movement.

"Junjun, Auntie, help me move the stuff a little so we can open the door a bit. I want to check the situation outside."

"That's too dangerous! Xiao Yu, your foot's still injured!" Auntie was immediately opposed to it.

I shook my head. "We can't stay here forever. There are too few

supplies here. We won't make it past a few days. We must think of a way of getting into the basement. Besides, the Muscle Man could have come from outside, so we've got to think of a way of shutting the front doors, otherwise more aberrants will get in."

"That... 'Muscle Man'," Here, Shujun almost laughed as she used my description, but immediately became serious again and continued, "He shouldn't be from outside. I've seen him before, he's Miss Nurse's boyfriend. He had probably been brought over by Miss Nurse late last night."

Hearing that, I got so angry I almost threw a fit. We really shouldn't have let the nurse stay. No thanks to her, we had two additional aberrants to deal with, and she didn't stay in her room either. No, she had to run to the kitchen, which had the second-most supplies in the entire house. She really pissed me off! Originally, we should have been able to peacefully live through the beginning of the apocalypse!

Seeing me get worked up, Shujun quickly patted my chest, and only after a long while did I recover my breath.

"Move the stuff. That Muscle Man just ate the nurse, so he'll probably rest for a day or two. We need to take this opportunity to move to the basement. Otherwise, when he's digested the meal and gets hungry again, this wooden door won't be able to hold him off."

The basement door was stainless steel, and although it wasn't like the double set of doors at the front entrance, there was an enormous amount of supplies inside. Just using the rice bags alone would be enough to block the door.

After this explanation, Shujun and Auntie had no choice but to start moving the stuff.

Opening the door a crack, I glanced outside. The corridor was empty. *Terrific!* Muscle Man wasn't here anymore. If he really had settled down in the corridor outside, I wouldn't have had a clue on what to do.

"I'm going out a sec."

At that, Shujun glanced at the open door, fear written on her face, then back at me, but still she steeled her heart and said, "Gē, it's best if I go."

"No!" Both Auntie and I exclaimed at the same time. As for Uncle, he was already so worn out from his injuries and blood loss that he had fallen asleep on the floor.

Shujun protested, "But Èrgē, your condition's too bad. How can you go out investigating?"

I shook my head. "Junjun, you don't understand the situation, so it's no use even if you go out to look. I have to go look myself. Stay here with Auntie and help her take care of Uncle."

Taking the house keys from Junjun, I walked to the open door, paused, then turned to say, "You turn into aberrants after you die. If things aren't looking good for Uncle, you best tie him up. Make sure to tie him tightly. If he really dies..."

I took a deep breath before continuing. "You must destroy his brain."
Auntie choked a sob, her hand flying up to cover her mouth.

Color drained from Shujun's face. I shot a look at her, and even though her eyes were filled with shock and alarm, she still gave me a silent nod. She really was a good girl. Although she looked soft and gentle, she had the tenacity to survive.

"Remember that Uncle would never want to hurt either of you, so don't let the aberrant that swallows him hurt you."

With that, I took in a deep breath and stuck my head out the door. The floor and walls of the corridor were red, interspersed with patches of white or meat-colored bits. If Shujun saw this, she would've either fainted or vomited. There was no way she could have brought herself to step past this sea of flesh and blood to scout out the situation. But thinking back to the beginning, I used to just scream and couldn't calm down at all, much less take up a baseball bat to bash out someone's brains. So Shujun really was doing quite well.

"..."

Jiang Shuyu must have really loved his sister. I felt a little at a loss.
Just what is with this feeling of wanting to protect Shujun even in my thoughts?

Sighing, I forged on with heavy steps.

My room was on the second floor and, from there, you only had to walk to the end of the corridor and look down to see the living room.

The kitchen was also on the ground floor, and to get to the basement, you had to pass through the kitchen, but not necessarily the living room.

I moved lightly, only a baseball bat in hand. Every room I passed by had a closed door, and the doors wouldn't budge even if I pushed, so the Muscle Man shouldn't be inside.

At the end of the corridor, I peeked downwards. There, the Muscle Man lay on the living room sofa, both eyes shut as though asleep. His stomach was engorged, so round that if he were pregnant, he would be in his twentieth month.

I sucked in a deep breath and lightly tapped the railing of the stairs with the baseball bat. Below, the Muscle Man moved, almost making me bolt back to the room, but he just turned over and stopped moving. I silently waited, and only when he completely failed to give any further reaction did I walk down the stairs. Then, I quickly turned into the corridor at the back and even stopped to take a look at the kitchen. The kitchen door was piled up with miscellaneous supplies up to a person's waist. It should be Uncle's handiwork, only that he hadn't had time to complete his task. My guess was that if the nurse hadn't made the move, then it would have been Muscle Man charging out. And this waist-high pile of supplies wasn't enough to block the nurse, so we ended up in the situation where we were chased by both the nurse and Muscle Man.

I stuck my head into the kitchen for a look inside. It was a mess, but the supplies were more or less intact, perhaps the one fortunate thing amidst all this misfortune.

Here, I quickly looked back alertly, only to see the Muscle Man's leg dangling on the upper part of the sofa. The rest of him was blocked by the sofa, but very obviously, he was remaining quite quiet.

The entrance to the basement was at the end of the ground floor corridor. I quickly strode over and glanced down those stairs leading into the basement. The stainless steel door was closed. I breathed a sigh of relief. As long as the basement was fine, we'd be able to live in there for a good year and a half, no problem.

I headed back to the room and knocking quietly on the door, murmured, "I'm Shuyu."

Auntie and Shujun immediately pulled open the door. I didn't go in, instead whispering, "Carry Uncle out. We're going down to the basement."

Their eyes brightened.

Uncle woke up immediately when called – this was a good sign. He had probably only fallen asleep from exhaustion just now rather than passing out.

"Close your eyes when you come out, and move forward slowly. Wait until I say so before opening your eyes."

The average person would never so easily accept a scene of carnage, and I had no desire to have them vomit like crazy the moment they stepped foot from the door, so I asked them to close their eyes before

moving out.

No matter how careful we all were, a group of us would still create more commotion than I just did. But there was nothing to do except slowly inch forward, and it felt like an excruciating half a day before we started going down the stairs.

The three of them saw the bulging belly of the Muscle Man, and their complexions took a turn for the worse. They probably understood why I had wanted them to close their eyes just now.

During our journey, the Muscle Man tossed and turned a few times, scaring us into immobility a good number of times, but we still made the safe if scary trip to the ground floor and through the kitchen. When the last person started down the stairs into the basement, I finally felt like I could relax.

"Junjun, Auntie, carry Uncle inside!"

After I tossed the keys to Shujun, I gripped the baseball bat and turned back to watch the top of the stairs warily. Seeing as we'd already gotten this far, there was nothing to worry about even if the Muscle Man suddenly came chasing us. Given how slowly he moved, I would have enough time to whack him with the bat before making a run for it.

The sound of the door opening behind me made me even more relieved. Compared to the previous apocalypse, this time around, I had a family, a place to live, and even a large amount of supplies, so it really wasn't too bad. Now if Jiang Shutian could just—

"Ahh!"

I looked back sharply and saw a dark shadow pounce on Shujun. My heart skipped a beat at the sight and I immediately rushed forward, swinging down the baseball bat.

But the bat was caught in one hand and his target switched from Shujun to me. A pair of blood-red eyes fixated on me. His face, with its pointed cheekbones and a long jawbone, was already completely inhuman and closer to being bat-like, and there was even a fair amount of black hair growing on his face.

Lin-bó! A chill swept over me. I yanked hard, dragging him from Shujun, and flung him to one side together with the baseball bat. At the same time, I yelled, "Junjun, go inside! Quick!"

With strength I didn't know I had, I gave a terrific shove, and Shujun crashed into Uncle and Auntie, the three of them falling through the doorway. Just as I was about to follow, I caught sight of Shujun opening her mouth in terror. She didn't even have the time to form her words, but I already knew what she wanted to say.

Something heavy struck my back and pain lanced through my shoulder – the agony of claws burrowing into flesh.

Shujun's eyes were filled with terror and fear, but overriding those feelings was concern. In the end, she actually crawled up to her feet, wanting to dash over to me.

I slammed the door shut on her terrified gaze and immediately bolted the door. This was the only door in the house that could be locked from the outside, and this was also why I had placed the chainsaw in the basement; if someone bolted the door shut from the outside, we could still force our way out with the chainsaw.

But even though there was a chainsaw behind that door, the supplies were in such a complete mess that it wasn't something that could be found at a moment's notice.

The Muscle Man be damned! I shouted at the door, "Don't open the door! Junjun, promise me, don't you ever open that door, you hear me?!"

The pain in my shoulder grew more and more intense. I looked around and was immediately struck by a foul odor. He was opening his mouth to bite down on my neck, and I barely managed to stop him by grabbing his lower jaw. If I really had gotten bitten on the neck by that mouth of teeth, then I really would have ended up being a meal in Lin-bó's belly.

I struggled to throw him off, hoping that on the off chance I'd be able to rush into the basement, but both his claws had a vice-like grip on my shoulder, the sharp nails digging down deep into the flesh. In addition, he had both legs wrapped around my waist, so I couldn't get him off no matter how hard I tried.

At this point, the pain was so overwhelming it almost drowned out my ability to think. My breathing had become difficult, and I knew at that very moment that I was on the verge of passing out.

Getting a firm grip on his head, I slowly took the stairs up, my consciousness growing fuzzier by the moment. I really had no idea how I found the willpower to keep walking on and on – even in my past life, I wasn't anywhere as resolute as I was now.

Once I reached the living room, I kicked the sofa forcefully. Even if I was going to die, there was no way in hell was I going to let things go the way these two bastards wanted. At the very least, I was taking one of them down with me!

The Muscle Man let loose a roar, and to my surprise, Lin-bó seemed scared of the Muscle Man. Upon hearing the roar, he instantly dropped from my body and squirreled back down the stairs toward the basement.

A chill had descended on my body and even my lips were so cold that my teeth couldn't stop chattering. Resigned to my fate, I waited for the Muscle Man to spring up and rip me to shreds, but amazingly, he didn't do so. He just turned over and continued sleeping.

Seeing that death wasn't coming this way, I could only drag my feet toward the corridor behind me, enter the room closest to the basement, and close the door – I didn't even have the strength to shove something over to block the door – then I collapsed directly onto the bed. Slowly, everything melded into a blur.

Lin-bó was guarding the entrance to the basement, so there was no way in for me, and as for my current condition...

That fucking nurse!

And that mother-fucking Lin-bó!



I must be burning up with a fever?

My head felt like it was splitting open, my cheeks were hot but my body felt icy. This body was originally very weak in the first place, and if not for the black fog, I probably wouldn't be able to get up. In fact, I was rather surprised I even woke up again – this Jiang Shuyu's constitution was quite something.

The thirst was too much for me, so even if I was as weak as a kitten, I absolutely had to get up to find something to drink.

Levering up my body, I discovered that this room seemed to belong to Lin-bó. Fortunately, the supplies from before were still here, otherwise I'd be better off bashing out my own brains rather than starving to death and turning into an aberrant, though having said that, there was no baseball bat anywhere to be seen!

I practically inhaled three cans of drinks. The fact of the matter was, there weren't all that many supplies in the room – just a box of drinks, a gallon-sized bottle of water, a dozen odd cans, as well as a few packs of candy and cookies. Theoretically, I was supposed to ration my supplies, but judging from the current state of my body, it was possible I wouldn't even live to see the sunrise tomorrow, so there was little point in saving up on the supplies. I might as well just replenish a little bit more water to see if I could get better.

After slaking my thirst, I looked down to check the wounds on my shoulder. There were ten puncture holes, but while there wasn't much blood, the wound looked unclean. If it got infected, I'd probably die. I dug out the medicine box and splashed on disinfectant like it was free. It stung so badly I almost screamed, and my mind, originally muddled from the fever, cleared instantly.

After disinfecting the wound, I carelessly swallowed a bunch of anti-inflammatory pills and painkillers. Then, hauling my leaden body along, I barely managed to move a table to block off the door. As for the rest, I gave up. I really didn't have the strength to move any more heavy things if I had to do it without making a sound.

Tasks completed, I lay on the bed, so tired I almost couldn't open my eyes, but the headache kept me from sleeping, so I could only let my thoughts wander.

In the previous life, I was ripped to shreds, and in this life, I'd die from a fever. Comparatively speaking, this was still a better death, except there was no chance of turning into an aberrant when I was torn to bits, whereas the same did not apply if I died from a fever.

If she saw that I had turned into an aberrant, I wonder how sad Shujun would be, and if Jiang Shutian came back, he would definitely be so pissed off he'd tear both Muscle Man and Lin-bó apart with his own two hands.

Now I could only hope that Junjun and Auntie wouldn't come out to find me, I hoped that Uncle could make a full recovery, I hoped Jiang

Shutian would come back... *Shit! Jiang Shuyu, just how much do you love your family? Why is it that, even with another person on the inside, I can't help but love them and worry about them even on the brink of death?*

I'd originally thought to die before the twenty-first, yet, now, I didn't want to die; I really hated the idea of dying.

"Junjun... Dàgē..."

Tears kept trickling down my cheeks, and for some reason, a lot of images flashed through my mind. Most were of Dàgē and Junjun, the occasional shots of "him," and also of my mother, who died during the early stages of the apocalypse.

Guan Weijun, Jiang Shuyu; the memories of these two people meshed together, and at that moment, I truly had no idea who I was.

I lifted my head to look at the photos hanging high above, the only things left of the father and mother I knew so well. Surrounding me were murmurs and whisperings, broken only by the clear sound of my little sister's sobs. Looking around, I saw Dàgē speaking with the adults, his complexion awful. Mèimei didn't dare to go over to him, so I walked over to give her a hug.

As I listened to Mèimei's crying, unknowingly, tears started to well up in my eyes, and I began to cry alongside her.

Dàgē finally came over. At seventeen, he was already very tall, and his arms were long enough to wrap around both of us, letting us cry in his

embrace. But Dàgē himself fought to keep a stony expression and refused to let a single tear fall from his eyes.

"Xiao Yu, you mustn't cry anymore after this. You need to help Dàgē protect Shujun..."

Xiao Yu? So these are Jiang Shuyu's memories?

I really couldn't figure it out. Am I really Guan Weijun, a woman who has taken over Jiang Shuyu's body?

My fever blazed on, completely scrambling my thoughts. Following that, the times when I regained consciousness were few and far between, and perhaps the one good thing out of all this was that there wasn't much commotion in the house. Even Muscle Man was quiet, his digestion needing much longer than I had anticipated.

Day three of the apocalypse.

I lifted my head to look at myself in the mirror. Even without much rationing of food and water, although I made an effort to eat more, I was still skeletally thin. My eyes, originally quite large to begin with, became frighteningly huge against my sunken cheekbones, and I actually started to resemble that bat-like Lin-bó. At this rate, I might really turn into that kind of aberrant when I died.

Pulling off the bandages around my shoulder, I was immediately assaulted by the smell of rot. My wound was infected...

I needed antibiotics, but there was none to be found, not even in the

basement. You needed a doctor's prescription for that kind of stuff. Otherwise, there was no easy way to get a hold of it.

Guess I won't have to worry about starving to death. This body of mine definitely wouldn't last until the day I ran out of food and starved. I started rooting around for belts. Lin-bó's collection of belts was much smaller than Jiang Shuyu's; there were only two to be found, just enough for one for each leg. So I tied down each leg like I did last time, only Lin-bó's bed didn't have any railings like the hospital bed I could tie them to. I ended up adding a finishing touch by ripping clothes into long strips to tie around the foot of the bed, so I could anchor my belts on them.

Another day passed.

As I quietly lay on the bed, I had the feeling that, if I closed my eyes this time, I really wouldn't be opening them ever again – or perhaps I should say, whatever opened its eyes wouldn't be me anymore.

At least I was able to save Junjun, Uncle, and Auntie. I accomplished so much more in these four days following the apocalypse in this life as compared to the ten years in my previous life.

Dàgē, come back. Junjun can only rely on you for the remaining times to come.

I stared at the ceiling, thinking about my loved ones down in the basement below. I absolutely refused to die, so I struggled to keep my eyes open until the very last instant. Just as my eyelids grew so heavy that I almost couldn't keep them open, the moment before they fully

closed, I suddenly heard a bunch of noises.

No way, Junjun and the others can't be coming out? I got so agitated that I immediately woke up again, and concentrated hard on listening. Footsteps, sounds of what sounded like combat, and someone calling out names...

"Shuyu!"

Are Uncle and Auntie calling me? No, hurry up and go back to the basement, hurry–

"Shujun!"

I started. *It can't be...*

"Where are you! Answer me!"

That shouting voice sounded close to the brink of insanity.

I suddenly realized who it was and a tremor ran through my body. Gathering all the strength in my body, I yelled with all my might, "Dàgē–"

The calling stopped, and I started doubting whether I was hearing things right before death. But the next moment, the entire door was smashed in, and even the table I had pushed up against the door was blown away to one side by the incredible force.

One person rushed to the bedside, looked down at me, and stiffened.

And that face that hadn't even shed a tear at his parent's funeral crumbled.

"Shuyu..."

Jiang Shutian lowered his head, stroking my cheeks with shaking hands, and his voice actually trembled as he spoke, threatening to turn into sobs.

Although I couldn't see it, I knew that I must look dreadful. I had already looked like a skeleton yesterday, and now I was on the verge of dying, so who knew what I looked like. Perhaps I was even scarier than an aberrant.

I worked my lips and tongue, but I couldn't make any sound.

"What?" He hurriedly leaned in close to listen.

I struggled to force out the words, "Basement, Junjun."

He immediately said, "Don't worry, Yunqian is checking it out."

I relaxed. Everything was alright now. We had Dàgē, and we had supplies. The apocalypse had nothing on us...

"Shuyu!"

I snapped out of my reverie and looked at Dàgē. *Strange, he is right by my side, yet his voice sounds like it's coming from very far away.* Dàgē's frantic expression made me feel slightly bemused. *The Dàgē*

who has always been taciturn and stern is freaking out? He bellowed to one side, "Bring the antibiotics! Right now! Shuyu, wake up, you've got to stay awake, Shuyu—"

Chapter #4: I Am Guan Weijun

When I next opened my eyes, there was only one thought in my mind.
Jiang Shuyu isn't just a healthy young lad. He has to be an athletic champion. No, maybe he is basically immortal?

By the bed, Shujun burst into tears, once again crying so hard that there wasn't a trace of the pretty girl left. Yet the only thought in my mind was, *Just how tough is Jiang Shuyu? This is simply unreal!*

To begin with, even though he had been in a coma after being knocked on the head by a tile, he was able to last through the moment of judgment with a wasted body like that. Next, even though he hadn't had time to recover, he fought a life-and-death match with the nurse, the nurse's boyfriend, and Lin-bó, suffered ten stab wounds to the shoulder, and lasted four days with an infected wound before he finally got antibiotics.

And he still isn't dead yet?

In my previous life, I'd seen no small number of people dying within the span of a few days just from an accidental cut on their hand getting infected!

Before I could even get a chance to speak to Shujun, she dashed out like a lunatic, screaming, "Èrgē's awake! Èrgē's awake!"

What followed was pretty much identical to my first day in this world, in that a heap of people rushed in and stared at me fixedly.

Jiang Shutian reached out, as though meaning to pat my shoulder, but halfway through the motion, he pulled his hand back before he actually patted me. My guess was that he was worried that if he even so much as touched me, his younger brother's shoulder would probably shatter.

I'd also just realized my hand looked like a shriveled stick, and it didn't seem like I could take another beating. I really had to take better care of this body.

"Shuyu, you've done very well." The first thing Jiang Shutian did was praise me, but his expression immediately darkened as he scolded me, "But you're pushing yourself too hard! You almost—"

He stopped there, unwilling to finish the sentence.

I smiled a little. There were a thousand things I wanted to say, to the point where I could literally grab my big brother and little sister and burst into tears. But I absolutely had to say something that totally ruined the mood.

"Dàgē, I need the bathroom..."

Jiang Shutian started, and then burst into laughter. "All right, Dàgē will take you there."

I balked, but just as I was about to protest, I gave up. In any case, there was no way I could do my business by myself in my current condition, and besides, having anyone other than Dàgē take me to the bathroom didn't seem any better.

Dàgē picked me up in a princess carry, causing a million conflicting feelings to rise in my heart. When I had been a woman, I'd never gotten this kind of treatment. Instead, it was only when I'd turned into a man that I got my first "princess carry." This was both comical and tragic at the same time.

When I was set on the toilet, I stared fixedly at Jiang Shutian. He looked back at me and asked in a puzzled manner, "Is there something wrong? Didn't you need the toilet?"

I replied honestly, "Dàgē, please leave. If you're around, I can't go." Jiang Shutian laughed. "What do you mean, you can't go? Didn't the nurse watch you go before?" There, he suddenly stopped, and his tone changed completely as he demanded with a furious undertone, "Don't tell me she was just letting you go by yourself?"

"No, she was very professional."

Although I hated the nurse's and her boyfriend's guts, I wasn't shallow enough to badmouth someone who was so dead that she was chow in someone else's belly. As a nurse, she really had been very professional and stuck to her job.

It was just that Dàgē and the nurse weren't the same. Many people would be able to pee in front of a nurse. But would you dare to pee in front of a stern, invincible general wielding a huge sword? I don't know about you, but anyway, I couldn't. I could feel chills coming from down there!

What's more, this general was really hot! I had been a woman until

just a few days back, dammit, and even though a woman who survived through the apocalypse for ten years was little different from a man, no way was I peeing in front of a hot guy. There should be a limit on how thick-skinned I had to be!

"Take your time. There's no rush." Dàgē sat on the rim of the bathtub, speaking in an unhappy tone. "The way you are now, I'm worried you'll collapse after just one visit to the bathroom!"

This worry wasn't baseless. At the moment, I was skeletal to the point of being like a withered branch, so dry that even the smallest flame would set me alight. So I could only give up the notion of making Dàgē leave. I tried not to look at him—*Dàgē, why do you look so imposing even when seated on top of a bathtub, one leg crossed over the other?! And if you have to cross your legs, don't do it like those magazine models!*

Using the shortest possible time, I openly relieved myself of my biological needs. Thankfully, it was only a pee pee. If it was a poo poo, then I think I simply wouldn't be able to do it, no matter how hard I tried...

Within five days, I absolutely had to recover to the point where I could go to the bathroom by myself. Otherwise, I'd definitely become constipated. *I wonder if we bought some laxatives when we were buying out the pharmacy?*

Dàgē suddenly gave a faint smile and said as he shook his head, "What are you thinking about? You've always thought of the most random things, and even Shujun says your expressions are more

interesting than any storybook.”

I started, once again reminded of how similar I was to Jiang Shuyu.

I was carried back to the bed. Unable to fall asleep but unable to do anything else by myself, I could only gaze around at my surroundings. As I did, I discovered that I was in a completely new room, or at least in neither the room I'd almost died in nor my own room—although that was probably because after three of us had shoved everything against the door, the place had become a complete mess.

All four walls were covered in lavender wallpaper, so this was probably Shujun's room. But I was still resting on the same hospital bed, so it had probably been moved over from my original room. It was true that it was much more convenient to have someone as badly injured as I was lying on a hospital bed.

At least it makes drinking chicken soup much easier... but why is there still chicken soup? I racked my brains but couldn't think of an answer. There was no electricity whatsoever, so you couldn't use a freezer. *Even if you had bought some chicken beforehand, wouldn't it have rotted by now?*

“They're vacuum packed.” Junjun held onto a bowl, feeding me as she explained with an innocent expression. “When we were buying things at the supermarket, I took lots of ingredient packs for chicken soup and chicken stock. I was thinking that no matter what happened, I could at least continue to feed it to you so you could get better quicker.”

I have to hand it to you, girl!

After ten years of the apocalypse, this is the first time I've had so much chicken soup that I've become scared of the stuff!

"Well done, Shujun," Jiang Shutian ruffled Mèimei's hair.

Shujun gave a brilliant smile—she probably very rarely got praised by the stern and taciturn Dàgē.

"Dàgē, why'd you only get back now?" I was genuinely curious. If he'd listened to me from the beginning, he should have been home ages ago. But if he hadn't gotten on a flight back at all, he wouldn't be here either.

After the twenty-first, things like planes would still be able to take off for a short period of time, but there was no way any ordinary person could get on one of those, unless Dàgē was someone even more impressive than I thought...

"Don't stop. Keep eating. I'll tell you what happened."

I nodded and frowned, letting Shujun continue to feed me chicken soup porridge.

"After I promised you I'd be back, I immediately booked tickets. But getting plane tickets so last-minute wasn't easy, so the flight I caught would only arrive at around six in the evening of the twentieth. By then, the fog had already started forming, so the plane refused to land."

Here, anger seeped into his voice as he continued, "The announcement said that they'd have to wait until the fog dissipated before landing. I called over a flight attendant to say that the fog would only get thicker and thicker, but they refused to listen. It was only at eight o'clock, when the plane was almost out of fuel, that those idiots were finally forced to land. By then, the fog was so thick you couldn't see the runway, and the plane almost crashed."

I see. My heart hammered furiously. Thank god they didn't end up crashing.

Dàgē looked at me, saying, "You said you needed antibiotics and guns. We couldn't bring those onto the plane, so I only acquired them after I was back. By then, the fog was so thick that everyone started realizing something was wrong. I couldn't find my usual contacts, so it took quite a while before I got a hold of those things."

So it was my fault! But the antibiotics saved my life, so it is really hard to say whether it was a good thing or bad thing—wait, if Dàgē had been home to start with, I wouldn't have needed antibiotics in the first place!

I looked closely at Dàgē. Previously, he had been in casual wear most of the time he was home, and he would usually wear a suit when heading out. But now, he was dressed completely differently: he was in camouflage fatigues and had guns in holsters strapped to his sides and back. He was wearing military boots and even had a knife inserted in each.

A Dàgē like this could knock the brains out of the nurse using just his fist, and with a baseball bat, he'd be able to finish off the nurse's boyfriend and Lin-bó as well. He wouldn't even need to use a gun!

I almost dug my own grave this time—Dàgē is much more critical than any gun or antibiotic out there!

Dàgē handed me a napkin, wanting me to wipe my mouth, but seeing as I was struggling to lift my hand, he simply wiped off the grease at the side of my mouth himself.

He looked down at my hand, continuing in a voice heavy with self-criticism, "It's all because I was too careless. By the time we completed the transactions, the fog was so thick we couldn't see the road. And worse, when we touched that fog, our skin would start stinging. At the time, I wasn't sure if the fog was poisonous, and we were still in the city. Normally, it would take a little over an hour to get home by car, but because we couldn't see the road, it would probably have taken over three hours. And if the fog was poisonous, we wouldn't be able to last it out until we got home."

I nodded. Before the moment of judgment, the black fog was quite weak—it'd just sting a little.

"So I headed back to think of a way to get some gas masks and oxygen tanks," Dàgē said calmly, "and those two were even harder to get a hold of."

Of course. Everyone had realized by that point that the fog was abnormal, so of course everyone would want to keep their gas masks

and oxygen tanks to themselves. Therefore, it was only to be expected that no one would be willing to sell them off.

"When I was in a standoff with the other party, something unexpected happened. Someone wanted to take the goods by force and started shooting, and with that, it broke out into a gunfight."

Beside me, Shujun gasped, almost shoving the porridge right up my nose.

Shutian frowned, reminding her, "Junjun, be careful. Don't make your Èrgē choke. He can't take any more shocks to his system."

"Sorry!" Shujun looked at me apologetically and gently wiped the porridge from my nose with a napkin.

I hastily reassured her. "No way am I that weak. Choking's not that big of a deal, and besides, that gunfight was enough to scare the wits out of me, let alone Junjun."

Jiang Shutian said discontentedly, "There's a limit to how much you should spoil Shujun. Good thing she's a sensible girl. Otherwise, you'd have spoiled her rotten."

Huh? "I" spoiled Mèimei? Isn't it you who's spoiling your younger siblings rotten?

Seeing my expression, Jiang Shutian hesitated, but still asked in the end, "Shuyu, you still don't remember anything?"

"Only a few scenes, not many, and nothing to link them together," I replied honestly, but I wasn't sure if those scenes were what "I" remembered, or simply the memories residing in Jiang Shuyu's body. However, Jiang Shutian relaxed a little at that, and said in a consoling tone, "The fact that you remember something means you're recovering. It shouldn't be long before you remember everything, so don't rush yourself."

I remained silent. *If I really did remember everything, then who would that make me?*

"And what happened after the gunfight?" I really didn't want to think about that question. The more I thought about it, the more confused I became, so I changed the subject.

"I didn't want to participate in the gunfight. But I absolutely had to get a hold of the gas masks and oxygen tanks, so I spent more time than I wanted there."

Jiang Shutian didn't elaborate on how he had managed to get the gas masks and oxygen tanks in the end, nor did I ask. As for Shujun, she probably didn't even realize.

"By the time we got back to the car, it was already past midnight." He spoke calmly before pausing there. But everyone knew what followed: after midnight, the moment of judgment descended, so there was no way he was making it back home.

"The next morning, I was the first to wake up. The others also woke up one by one, but there were two in the team who didn't seem right..."

Jiang Shutian hesitated, then, seeing our expressions, confessed, "We killed them."

"Dàgē, how many people did you bring?" I asked curiously.

"Including myself, a total of eight."

Only two out of eight turned into aberrants—that was a really low ratio.
It really goes to show how strong these people are!

"Shuyu, in your dreams, how many people turned into monsters?"

"Half." I lifted my head and said with absolute seriousness, "Dàgē, half of humanity turns into aberrants, and animals and plants turn, too."
This was the apocalypse not just of humanity, but of all living things on Earth.

Unexpectedly, Jiang Shutian didn't look too shocked. Then again, when I thought about it, in the past four days of his journey home—it was only a little more than an hour by car, but after the end of the world, a little more than an hour was more than enough to kill a person a hundred times over—there must have been an unthinkable number of dangers lying in wait along the way.

"The roads in the city were packed with cars. When the black fog fell, many people wanted to run away. The roads were crammed, so there was no way we could drive out of the city. We gave up on the car and ended up walking to the edge of the city where we looked for another car to drive. On the way, we encountered quite a lot of... aberrants."
Dàgē chose to use the same descriptor as me this time. "That delayed

us some more, so we came back late. Sorry.”

He described it like it was nothing, but both Shujun and I were stunned. Three aberrants almost killed us, we who were safely tucked away at home and prepared for every possible contingency, whereas Dàgē and his lot had been out in the open, walking along roads filled with aberrants!

Then again, Dàgē had guns, whereas I only had a baseball bat. Dàgē had companions who were veterans at fighting, whereas I only had Mèimei, Uncle, and Auntie—I tried to reassure myself that it wasn't because I was so useless that even though I'd traveled across universes, I was still worse off than the original inhabitants of the world.

“What're you thinking about?” Dàgē ruffled my hair, saying, “Don't think too much. What you need most right now is rest. Dàgē will take of everything, so don't worry.”

“Uncle is okay?” I suddenly remembered. *Uncle was injured—he couldn't have gotten infected, could he?*

Dàgē laughed. “He's fine. Auntie's taking care of him. Uncle's doing much better than you are.”

Hearing that, I relaxed, and chatted peacefully with Mèimei until I drifted off at some point in the conversation.

During the next few days, I lived like a pig. Eat, sleep, eat, sleep—I didn't even take a single step out of Shujun's room. As for Shujun,

doting on her was the right course after all—she spent every day taking care of me, attending to my every need. With just one meaningful look from me, she could tell whether I was hungry, thirsty, or needed the bathroom.

Junjun, my beautiful, cute, understanding caretaker who doesn't expect anything from me! If I was a man, I'd marry you for sure! Wait, I really am a man—but your brother. Disappointment...

"What are you thinking about again? Gē, what kind of expression is that!" Shujun couldn't stop laughing.

I said pitifully, "I was thinking that, because I'm your brother, I can't make you my wife. Junjun, tell me, do you think I could actually be adopted?"

Shujun rolled her eyes, remarking, "With your looks, especially your eyes that are almost identical to mine, if we're not siblings, then you've got to be my dad!"

I wailed, "No, it's hopeless!"

"What's hopeless?" Dàgē just happened to walk in at this point, and his expression darkened, obviously not amused by those words.

I quickly explained, "I was saying me and Junjun are real siblings, so it's hopeless. I can't marry her."

At that, Jiang Shutian's expression lightened a little, and he grumbled, "Honestly, you've been kicking up a fuss about how you want to marry

your sister ever since you were little. Be careful; she may really end up not being able to marry because of your fussing.”

My expression changed, and Shujun quickly asked, “Èrgē, what’s the matter? Are you hurting somewhere?”

I forced a smile and changed the subject. “I’m fine. It’s just, can I leave the room for a stroll? It’s been really dull cooped up in this room.”

Dàgē wavered for a moment, but under the beseeching gazes of Shujun and me, he ended up agreeing to my request. “All right, but you need to sit in the wheelchair. Here, I’ll carry you over.”

I nodded obediently, letting Dàgē carry me to the wheelchair and push me out of the room.

Guan Weijun, Jiang Shuyu—these two people were sharing more and more similarities. As to what the truth was, I didn’t dare to think about it.

In the living room, four people were lounging lazily on the sofas, including one who was reading. That was someone I’d seen before, Dàgē’s secretary, Zheng Xing.

If he is a secretary, then I am a man... Ahem, I forgot again that I am a man.

The other three were unfamiliar faces. Also, Ceng Yunqian wasn’t anywhere to be seen.

But they all had one thing in common. They were dressed in camouflage combat gear and armed with guns and knives.

I quietly asked, "Dàgē, you don't run a design company, do you?" Jiang Shutian paused for a moment before saying, "No, I run a mercenary troop for hire." He stopped, then added, "You knew that, originally. That lie was only for Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie."

This made Shujun so unhappy she started pouting.

"Sitting on the armchair is Xiao Sha. The blond guy is Cain. The girl's Lily." Jiang Shutian said a little awkwardly, "You've seen them in the past."

Of the four, Xiao Sha looked to be the youngest, possibly only in his early twenties. But he couldn't be that young. Those eyes of his were too old for that. He was quite a cold guy. When Dàgē introduced him, he just twitched the corner of his mouth as a greeting.

The blond Cain was a foreigner and seemed much more expressive. When it was his turn for introductions, he didn't just wave but even smiled brightly. Those white teeth of his almost blinded me. He was your stereotypical hot foreigner.

*The girl's Lily... This is a little ambiguous!*¹ For a moment, I almost doubted Dàgē's Chinese.

The woman was your typical fighter type—bronzed skin over toned muscle—and she even had pronounced biceps on her arms. She looked

much sturdier than I did, who had evolved from a withered twig to a thin stick. Even so, she didn't look excessively muscular, just very fit and sensual.

"Well, you look like you've finally gotten a little more flesh on those bones of yours." Cain walked over and pinched my arm, saying, "But you're still skinny as hell, though better than when I first saw you. You looked like a mummy at the time, and that almost drove Boss nuts."

"What do you mean, a mummy?!" Jiang Shutian snapped, "My brother's alive and well!"

Lily interjected from one side, "That's right, just a few more days, and he'll be back to being that handsome boy again. Remember to let Jiějie give you a smooch then!"

I was a little surprised. This Lily was obviously speaking up to smooth things over. I didn't expect someone who looked like a warrior queen to have such an unqueenly character.

"Then can I choose to give Junjun a few kisses?" Cain said with a grin.

"No!" I exclaimed.

"Sis-con," harrumphed Xiao Sha to the side.

Why does that feel like a stab to my chest? I'm no sis-con. I like men—wait! Doesn't it seem worse to like men now?

Holy shit! The whole sexual orientation thing finally struck me.

Previously, I was so preoccupied with the apocalypse and how to survive, that things like sexual orientation took the back seat. Getting fed and staying warm took priority over lewd thoughts!

But now I had Dàgē, no worries about my health, a whole basement full of supplies, and no need to fret about shelter. So I had leisure for the whole issue about my sexual preferences to hit me.

Even though I have a man's body, I have the soul of a woman. Just what kind of partner am I supposed to find? Don't tell me I have to be gay? And with my womanly tendencies, I'd probably end up on the bottom...

No! Absolutely not! I'd seen too many women getting raped in my previous life. At the beginning of the apocalypse, women were even begging strong men to sleep with them in exchange for supplies in order to survive. It was so humiliating you'd almost rather die.

Now that I've finally gotten a chance to start over, no one is going to top me, be it a guy or a girl!

Mind made up, I looked up resolutely, only to see everyone staring at me.

The big brother looked dismayed.

The little sister was stifling her laughter as she said, "Èrgē, you're daydreaming again."

I flushed red, spinning my wheelchair so my back was to everyone, and blurted the first excuse that came to mind. "Ineedabath, bye."

"Are you planning to bathe or kill yourself?" Dàgē asked, disgruntled. "Even standing up is difficult for you, much less bathing. I'll help you wash up, and besides, I need a shower too. I smell too strongly, which isn't suitable for securing more supplies outside."

"I was just looking for an excuse to escape." I had no choice but to confess, "I don't need a bath. And besides, water's very precious now. How can I use it for a bath?"

Dàgē said blandly, "Don't worry, just don't waste too much. There are quite a few water tanks close by, while there aren't many of us."

I suddenly remembered that this was the suburbs. Almost all the places around here were standalone houses, many of which had water tanks on their roofs. However, you just had to have one aberrant in the household, and the likelihood was slim that anyone would survive. Although there was lots of looting and robberies after the apocalypse, most of the households in the suburbs were families, so you only needed one death to wipe out the entire family, which left very few survivors. As for the people in the cities, they were pretty much trapped. There were very few like Dàgē who could make their way out of the city. Besides, there were many more supplies in the city, so it wasn't likely that anyone would prefer to target the suburbs.

I was hesitating, but when I heard Dàgē remark, "Everyone else has washed up, so it's just you left," I caved in. No one would want to stink of sweat and blood by choice if they could bathe.



Once we were in the bathroom, I remembered once again, with a jolt, that I was still a woman on the inside!

Letting a strong, hot hunk help her bathe is a steamy dream that every woman has—if my body was also a woman's, then that would be very steamy indeed, but I was currently a man. To say nothing of the fact that I was this mighty man's younger brother, who was as skinny as a stick!

Even if I took a page from those fujoshi friends in my old world to reduce my embarrassment at being washed clean by someone else, I only had to see my own body to shatter the daydream of beautiful love between handsome hunks and pretty boys.

My body was in an unbearably awful state.

I was bony, joints and bones protruding under skin, and my shoulder was heavily bandaged front to back. Countless bruises, scratches, and wounds of all sizes dotted me from head to toe, and I'd even lost two fingernails from I-don't-know-which fight.

Jiang Shutian gently supported me to the stool and rested my back against the bathtub. Only once he was sure I wouldn't slip off did he start using a towel wet with soapy water to carefully scrub my skin. He first dabbed lightly at my face—this face of mine was all sharp angles and edges, propped up by a neck as thin as a chopstick—then a chest so skinny that my ribcage stuck out...

During the entire process, Jiang Shutian's brows were tightly knit, his expression so dark it was like the end of the world had come—and yet again I'd used a bad description. *It really is the end of the world now!* "I'm just a bit thin, that's all," I consoled him, "After a few more days of eating, I'll put on more weight."

Hearing that, he said in a heavy voice, "You used to be an athlete, and ever since high school, all sorts of athletic clubs clamored for you to join. You even mentioned once that you had a headache over which club to join in university."

Bullseye. Just as I'd guessed.

"Last time, when you were knocked out by the tile, I was very sad, but I also knew that there was no way of anticipating that kind of accident. But this time, you had warned me beforehand, yet I still wasn't in time to protect you two!"

Jiang Shutian ground his teeth, full to the brim with self-directed rage, and said hoarsely, "If it weren't for you, this entire family would have been wiped out!"

I said honestly, "That might be true for everyone else, but Dàgē, you would have been able to survive on the other continent for sure."

Jiang Shutian flinched, and amazingly, a hint of fear crept into his voice as he said, "I was almost trapped on the other continent, never able to return, never able to know what became of the two of you."

Unsurprisingly, Dàgē was able to guess that in this situation, he simply wouldn't have been able to return from the Arctic to Meisia.

"Actually, I regretted telling you. I was worried that I'd gotten you killed because the plane crashed, or you couldn't make it home from the airport, or you were trapped by the aberrants or something."

"Don't! You did well," Jiang Shutian said sternly. "Don't worry about that. The moment there's any danger, just tell Dàgē. You don't have to worry about my safety. Just like you said, I'll be able to survive, and I'll definitely keep you two alive and well. Even if it's the end of the world, nothing will happen to our family. Dàgē will protect you!"

Protect...

Unknowingly, tears welled up in my eyes.

In my previous life, I had also had someone I'd relied on. In the beginning, we'd supported each other, but this gradually turned into a relationship of charity and exploitation, and in the end, I had been abandoned.

In this life, the person I could rely on looked even more reliable, yet the one being protected wasn't truly me. If he ever found out the truth, I would probably still be abandoned.

Jiang Shutian reached out to brush away my tears, and asked uncomprehendingly, "Why are you crying? You will get better. Zheng Xing is a field doctor and he says you're still young, so you will recover quickly. You just need to rest for a while and there won't be any aftereffects."

I shook my head, but the tears kept coming. I really was a woman—my tears were all worthless.

I'm not Jiang Shuyu.

I am Guan Weijun.

"Dàgē, when I was dreaming, I was a woman called Guan Weijun. I dreamed a dream that was a full ten years long.

"I can't remember anything about Jiang Shuyu.

"I can't figure out who I am."

I hesitated, but in the end, I still confessed, "I—I think I'm Guan Weijun."

Jiang Shutian stilled, and I painfully closed my eyes, not wishing to see his shock and rage, yet the image of him and his large hands reaching out to snap my slender, chopstick-like neck kept flashing repeatedly in my mind.

Suddenly, there came a sensation of my head being rubbed.

"You are my little brother, Jiang Shuyu. I'm absolutely sure, if you were anyone else, Shujun and I would have discovered it. Definitely!"

I froze and opened my eyes to peek at Jiang Shutian. He had a resolute expression, nothing else. I said in a shaky voice, "Then Guan Weijun..."

"Must be your past life!" Dàgē said adamantly, "Being knocked on the head let you remember memories from your past life! Your past life must have been a woman called Guan Weijun."

Um, wait, Dàgē, isn't there something wrong with your logic? I didn't say anything about parallel worlds, which means my past life was in the future, and there would even be an overlap in my past and present lives right now. Don't you think that's strange?

Dàgē, don't forget that I was the one who predicted the end of the world!

Dàgē rebuked me, "You've always overthought things, even as a kid. And you've really gone too far this time. Just a little thing like remembering your past life after losing your memories and now you're even suspecting that you aren't Shuyu."

Wait, Dàgē, don't be so sure that that was a past life! And what do you mean "just a little thing" like losing my memories and remembering my past life? Are you saying memories of your past life are small trifles like losing or forgetting where you put your keys?

I goggled at Dàgē, but he didn't seem bothered at all. If anything, he looked as though nothing serious or drastic had come out of this conversation.

"But, but... what if I really am not Jiang Shuyu? What will you do, Dàgē?"

I still couldn't believe him, still didn't dare to believe him. If they kept treating me like I was Jiang Shuyu, and then someday they discovered that I really wasn't Jiang Shuyu, I was sure this man in front of me would change from a Dàgē into the Devil!

If he is going to snap my neck, he should do it now. I can't bear to give my all and be betrayed again!

Jiang Shutian reached out and picked me up in one smooth action, scaring the wits out of me. I thought he had decided not to snap my neck but instead fling me down to my death, but he just gently placed me into the bathtub.

Shujun had specially heated up some hot water to let me bathe, and only I was getting this special treatment. The others had just taken cold showers.

"You're worried I would hurt you?" Jiang Shutian acutely discovered my fears.

The hot water was very soothing, but I couldn't help but tremble from Dàgē's question. I wavered for a moment, but in the end, I nodded forcefully.

Jiang Shutian's expression clouded over for a moment, and then he knelt down so that he was on eye-level with me. He pledged, "Shuyu, I would never hurt you or Shujun."

I lifted my head to look at him, saying sharply, "What if I really wasn't your younger brother, Jiang Shuyu?"

Jiang Shutian looked at me. Even though he was expressionless, even though he didn't have to be angry to be imposing, I stared back at him without shrinking back in the slightest. I absolutely needed to get an answer today. I didn't want to keep hiding and dodging the matter. I was growing to love this family, but at the same time, I was increasingly fearful of the day the truth would come to light, turning this family into my enemy.

"Since you've come clean and told me everything, I will also promise you, I will treat you as Shuyu no matter what. That should be fine, right?"

With that, he ruffled my hair again and then started stripping to get washed.

I goggled at Dàgē as his words replayed in my head, dazed. *Just how stubborn is he in believing that I am Jiang Shuyu? Or does he absolutely have to have a younger brother called Jiang Shuyu? Or maybe I really am Jiang Shuyu... I'm so confused!*

When I finally managed to snap out of my reverie, a freaking stark naked man was standing right in front of me, and was even scrubbing here and there with a bar of soap. From that handsome face, down to those sexy collarbones, then the swell of his chest and those powerful, firm biceps, and further down was a six pack...

AHHHHHHHHHH! Don't look down any further! Remember that he just said he would treat you as his younger brother no matter what! Fantasizing about your Dàgē while you are the younger brother...

Could you get any more perverted?!

If Shujun knew I was having naughty thoughts about Dàgē, I really didn't know what she'd think of me—*wait, why am I worried about what my little sister thinks at a time like this? Normally, I'm supposed to be more worried about what Dàgē thinks, right?*

Don't tell me, Jiang Shuyu, you're a sis-con!

Physically a sis-con, mentally a bro-con, I really take perverseness to a whole new level!

Right now, if I liked men, I'd be gay. If I liked women, I'd be a lesbian. Fantasizing about my older brother, dreaming about my little sister—is there still any hope for me? Should I give up on getting therapy?



I was drowsily carried back to bed, and I curled up under the blanket, pretending I was dead to the world. I actually got a nosebleed while I was watching the hottie step out of the bath, scaring the living daylights out of Dàgē. He thought I had internal injuries, and my nonsensical explanation didn't get me anywhere, so I ended up pretending that I was in the bath for so long that I was getting a bit dizzy to divert his attention. *That's why I don't want to keep lusting after people!*

Shujun stared at the dizzy me with wide eyes and an open mouth, and exclaimed, "Èrgē, what happened? How'd you become like this after a bath?"

Dàgē beckoned her, saying, "Shujun, come over. I want to tell you something."

Next, Jiang Shutian actually told Shujun about all my confessions, making me almost leap out of bed to stop him. If Shujun were to look at me strangely, I wouldn't be able to take it. *I still want to get along with my cute little sister!*

But then again, since I'd already told Dàgē everything, I might as well get everything done and over with. It beat having things weighing down on me all the time. *I am going crazy from the torture of caring about people but feeling guilty at the same time!*

I shifted a little and peeked out from between the blankets to spy on Dàgē and Mèimei.

Jiang Shutian asked calmly, "Shujun, do you think Èrgē has changed?" Shujun frowned a little, her exquisite eyebrows knitting together briefly, and immediately retorted, "Of course not! Dàgē, Èrgē was hit on the head by a tile. Don't tell me you were hit as well?!"

Mèimei, you've got guts! You actually dared to speak to Dàgē in such a tone. As expected from the girl who once busted a head with a bat!

"Just how is Èrgē any different from before? Not long after waking up, he started calling me Junjun. And in the past few days, now that he's loosened up, he's started clamoring about how he wants to marry me. He's the same as ever, so how could he not be Èrgē?"

I was stunned.

That's right, why did I start calling her Junjun? In the past, I was called Guan Weijun and everyone called me Xiao Jun. So why didn't I call her Xiao Jun as well, instead of Junjun?

I was doubtful. *Maybe it is because this is Jiang Shuyu's body, so it's a reflexive action?*

Don't tell me I can actually start believing the story that I am just remembering things from my past life, rather than being a stray ghost that took over Jiang Shuyu's body?

Shujun was adamant. "It's simple. Èrgē was hit on the head, and he recovered his memories from his past life!"

She actually came to the same conclusion as Dàgē. God, the two of you really are siblings! There's no way I could have a past life from the future that actually overlaps with the present, right?! What happened to your logic?

"That's what I thought, too," Jiang Shutian nodded, and then actually looked over at me, saying with a smile, "Got that? Jiang Shuyu, don't pretend to be sleeping."

I froze, before reluctantly peeling away the blanket.

"Èrgē, your crazy thoughts have reached a whole new level!" Shujun berated me as she used a towel to rub my hair dry. *How can there be such a great little sister in this world?*

"I just..."

I couldn't say it. I was still very doubtful. I could remember Guan Weijun's memories clearly, and not just the ten years after the apocalypse, but the whole thirty-five years of her life! Memories before the apocalyptic days were faint, but that was because the memories of the apocalyptic world were simply too vivid.

As for Jiang Shuyu, I only remember bits and pieces, not to mention they were all from a dream, so how could I possibly think of myself as Jiang Shuyu?!

Suddenly, Shujun jumped into my arms. She hadn't used a lot of force but the impact still made my chest hurt. But I didn't care in the slightest and hugged her, instantly filled with some sort of peace and satisfaction.

With a catch in her voice, Shujun begged me, "Èrgē, don't think too much. Just focus on getting better! You're so, so skinny right now. It hurts when I look at you."

"All right, I'll stop thinking," I immediately gave my honest response.

"As expected, we needed Shujun for this," Dàgē said wryly. "Honestly, you just really want to marry Mèimei, don't you?"

Guilty as charged: even though I am her older brother with a woman's instincts, if I really have the chance, I really do want to marry my little Mèimei, Shujun. This kind of thinking is simply too crazy! Boohoo, Jiang Shuyu, you're an epic pervert who's a sis-con!

I made a face, unsure of what to do with my continual thoughts of Dàgē fantasies and marrying Mèimei.

Dàgē glanced at the clock and said, "Go to sleep. I'm going to switch shifts with Yunqian. She's still on guard duty in the attic."

At that, I was suddenly reminded that this wasn't the time to fantasize about your Dàgē or think about whether to marry your Mèimei. It was the end of the world, and what was most important now was to strengthen yourself!

And in this apocalyptic world, being a sis- and bro-con was peanuts compared to the perverts out there!

"Wait, Dàgē, what date is it today?"

Jiang Shutian paused mid-step to reply, "June twenty-ninth."

No way, it's tomorrow?! I said quickly, "Gē, don't go yet. Sit down and listen. On the thirtieth, something big will happen!"

Dàgē pondered for a moment and asked, "Are you tired? Do you have energy to go to the living room to tell everyone?"

I said slowly, "Dàgē, you told them I predicted the apocalypse?" *Will I be treated as some kind of demon?*

Jiang Shutian nodded, saying, "Don't worry, you know about the apocalypse, so you are the most critical asset."

I see. In that case, even though I'm currently like a stick and am only useful as firewood, everyone's number one goal will still be to protect me—how can that be? Shujun is the most important one!

I tugged at Shujun, deciding that I would make her follow wherever I went.

Once in the living room, Dàgē assembled everyone, and even Ceng Yunqian came downstairs from watch duty.

Everyone was focused on me. I didn't know how much they believed in what I said, but if anyone had doubts, those doubts were well hidden.

I thought things over and decided to start explaining from the black fog. "The black fog of the moment of judgment will turn those people who can't make the cut into aberrants. But it's got its perks as well. Although the aberrants are very strong, the people who survive will become strong, too."

Looks of surprise crossed people's faces.

"Around the tenth day of the apocalypse, everyone will begin to find that their bodies have changed, and you will even begin developing special powers."

Jiang Shutian asked for more detail. "What kinds of special powers?"

"It's hard to say," I said with a little frustration. "There are all sorts of powers and no one really knows where these powers come from."

There are some theories that say these are powers we subconsciously want. So tonight, I want everyone to think hard about what kinds of powers you want. Maybe that'll be of some use."

"That's great!" Cain said delightedly, "Then we don't have to be afraid of those things anymore."

I shook my head. "Actually, no. In the first ten days of the apocalypse, even though the aberrants have killed many people, many people were actually killed only because they didn't react in time. The aberrants aren't very strong right now, just a little better than the average human. But after the tenth day, even though we will have grown stronger, so will the aberrants."

If this body wasn't so weak from waking up after a month of bed rest, just with my ten years of experience after the apocalypse, I would have been able to use a baseball bat to leisurely deal with the three aberrants... Well, that said, I might have needed another way of handling the Muscle Man.

But if that's the strongest aberrants ever got, then it wouldn't be the apocalypse.

Dàgē asked heavily, "You said that it gets bad after the tenth day of the apocalypse. Are you saying that the aberrants evolve faster than us?"

I thought about it and replied, "It's not that they evolve faster, but that they don't have any morals or principles guiding them. Humans fear aberrants and want to run away in fear. But aberrants aren't

scared of humans, and only prey that's stronger than them triggers their animalistic instinct to run away."

Putting it another way, normal people are scared of wolves, and wolves are scared of death. Aberrants are like wolves that don't fear death. *How could they be anything but vicious?*

"And many aberrants will have eaten a lot of 'food' within the first ten days of the apocalypse. So at the beginning, they will be much stronger than us."

Dàgē delved in further, asking, "What do you mean by 'food'?"

"People who survived the black fog."

Everyone's complexions changed.

"You need to eat humans to grow stronger?" Dàgē frowned deeply. Even though he was made of stern stuff, the idea of needing to eat people didn't sit well with him.

I shook my head and said, "It's aberrants that need to eat flesh and blood. No, let me correct myself. They don't just have to eat humans. They can eat animals or plants, anything that survived the black fog. They eat absolutely anything that's alive. But we humans are evolving down a different branch from the aberrants, and eating flesh or blood doesn't do anything for us. Non-aberrants have no way of converting flesh and blood into the energy needed for evolution."

Everyone relaxed with looks of relief mingled with pity.

I watched them quietly, keeping quiet on certain things, and just reminded them, "So, starting from tomorrow, aberrants won't be the same as before. Don't take them lightly."

"Èrgē, are you done? Go back to rest!" Shujun said as she looked at me anxiously. Perhaps fatigue had crept across my face at some point, worrying her greatly. Then again, having spoken so much, I really did feel a bit tired.

"Shujun, take your Èrgē back to his room." Dàgē didn't even wait for me to say "I'm done talking" before directly ordering Shujun to take me back. Then, he turned to the others and said, "Everyone will reconvene in the living room tomorrow to see if anyone has the special powers Xiao Yu talked about."

Once I was back in my room and lying flat on my back in bed, I got a little uneasy. In my previous life, Guan Weijun only had vision that was a little better than most, and together with her decent skills with guns, she made a pretty good sharpshooter, but that was it. That little bit of power really wasn't of much use in this apocalyptic world. I really hoped I could get better powers in this life, but I didn't really have high expectations with a body as frail as this...

"Go to sleep, Èrgē. Don't keep thinking about things." Shujun stroked my hair lightly, like she was soothing a kid into sleepy-land.

I gazed at Shujun's face, those crescent eyebrows, large and bright almond-shaped eyes, the distinctive straight nose of the Jiang family, and her lips which, while bare, were pink and luscious, and made one

want to kiss her to see what she tasted like. After the past few days' experiences in the apocalypse, the girl seemed to have matured a little, becoming all the more beautiful.

"Junjun, you really are so lovely and cute."

She laughed. There wasn't any girl who disliked being praised for her beauty. But in the apocalypse, beauty was only a commodity, which was either taken advantage of or used shamelessly in exchange for a few morsels of food.

I wholeheartedly prayed that my power in this world would be strong enough so I wouldn't need to live under other people's protection in this life, strong enough so I could protect this lovely girl before me with my own two hands and ensure that she could live a good life in this apocalyptic world!

Please, although the ten years in the apocalypse made me believe that there were no gods in this world, it's not too late for me to pick up religion again, right? Please, gods of all faiths and beliefs, grant me the power to protect Mèimei and Gēge!

...The fact that I actually thought about protecting that Dàgē means I'm a prime example of a person who overestimates their own capabilities, right?

I gave a wry laugh, and, under Mèimei's accusing stare, tucked away those runaway thoughts of mine and slowly slipped into the land of dreams.

Footnotes

¹ ***"The girl's Lily... This is a little ambiguous!"***: Shuyu means that Shutian could be saying that her name is Lily, which might have come from being named after a flower, or he could mean that she's a lesbian. Lilies are used to symbolize lesbianism in places such as Japan.

Chapter #5: Special Powers

"Mom!"

I looked down from the rooftop and fired, hitting the aberrant behind him. It was only then that I realized Mom hadn't climbed up yet, and an aberrant had grabbed hold of her foot.

I once again aimed and fired, but the gun only made clicking noises—I was out of bullets!

"Save my mom!"

He was right above my mom and still had time to pull her up. With his strength, he definitely could pull up my mom.

I was hopeful, but then he turned and hauled up another person. And in that instant, my mom was dragged down by the aberrant and slammed heavily back to the ground. An entire streetful of aberrants swarmed toward her like locusts, and she lifted her head to look at me. She only managed a shout of "Xiao Jun!" Then there was no more.

"MOM-!"

My last memory of my mother was a spray of flesh and blood. I collapsed onto the ground, and then I looked up in time to see him helping another woman crawl onto the rooftop.

One thing only... My mind was filled with just one thing, and it was the impulse to strangle this person to death.

"Your mom was already so badly injured," he explained somewhat wearily, "Even if we saved her, she would have turned into an aberrant. And when that happens, you'll need to kill her with your own two hands. Isn't that even worse?"

"Getting injured doesn't mean she'd get infected for sure!" I wailed tearfully as I pummeled the bastard, screaming, "I saved you, so why didn't you save my mom?!"

He explained patiently with a helpless look on his face, as though his heart was really aching, "Weijun, Xiao Qi's healing power is very important. We can't lose her!"

I snarled hatefully through clenched teeth, "Can't lose her ability, or can't lose her? So someday, when it comes down to it, you'll choose to save her over me?"

"How is that even the same thing? Weijun, I love you! Believe me, I just want to protect you..."

Love? Bullshit! Like hell you're gonna protect me! I actually believed him. I was actually stupid enough back then to believe in his lies!

Women—how fucking stupid can you get?!

"Gē! Èrgē!"

"Shuyu, wake up!"

My eyes sprang open. A blurry vision greeted me, and my head was so foggy that I couldn't make head or tail out of what was going on. Someone jumped into my arms, calling out urgently, "Èrgē!"

"...Junjun?"

I stroked her hair, which was soft and smooth to the touch, then blinked. Only once I blinked away the excess tears from my eyes could I see Dàgē looking down at me with a face full of worry.

"I'm fine, really," I said with a wry smile. "Just dreamt of something from the past."

At the beginning of the apocalypse, my sharpshooting skills really were quite useful, and I had saved him countless times, yet I wasn't able to save my own mother.

Fortunately, I had fired to save him before discovering my mom's predicament. If I had noticed at the same time that both of them were in danger, and that I only had one bullet left, then the absolute dumbass that I used to be might have really ended up choosing to save him instead of my own mom.

And I'd never be able to forgive myself!

...Although, I don't really want to forgive myself at the moment either.

"Family's most important."

I hugged Shujun tightly. Mèimei, Gēge, Uncle, and Auntie—I had to

protect them all. I had to protect them with no qualms or doubts, without overestimating myself—an unconditional and absolute protection!

"Shuyu, did someone hurt you in the future? I mean, you as in Guan Weijun," Dàgē said, his words as tempting as a devil's. "If you see him again, tell Dàgē which person it is, okay?"

If Dàgē found out, he would die in such a horrible way that I wouldn't be able to continue hating him, right?

I laughed and told Dàgē and Mèimei about my theory on parallel worlds.

"So I don't think I'll ever see him again, Dàgē."

Dàgē narrowed his eyes slightly and just said "Mmm," looking a little disappointed.

I brushed away my cold sweat. No matter how much I hated him, it seemed almost too cruel to hand him over to Dàgē—but if I really did see him again, I would still sell him out to Dàgē in a heartbeat!

Shujun lifted her head from my embrace, saying anxiously, "Èrgē, you don't go easy on yourself even in your dreams. How are you ever going to recover?"

I gave a bitter smile. Dreams weren't things I could control, although, there was something that worried me.

"Did I sleep talk?"

In the apocalyptic world, this was a big taboo. Everyone had nightmares when living in those circumstances, but if they were to shout or talk in their dreams, they wouldn't have to wake up anymore.

Even before the aberrants came, the people nearby would immediately kill them!

Shujun shook her head. "No, you just tossed and turned and sweated a lot."

I breathed a sigh of relief. *Good, my instincts haven't gone rusty.* In the days to come, those instincts from the previous world would be crucial.

"Èrgē's all sweaty. Dàgē, help him wash up. I'll make a nutritious breakfast for Èrgē."

"Junjun..." I called out to her and begged with a mixed expression of anxiousness, agony, and misery, "Can I not have chicken soup today?"

Shujun grinned, chuckling with amusement, "Sure!"

In the end, I had medicinal porridge. *Shujun, when did you manage to squirrel away so many packs of medicinal herbs? Did I go crazy when I was shopping that time? How did I not notice!?*

Although I ended up with an overly oily aftertaste in my mouth when I was done, with the nourishment of three meals a day as well as late

night snacks, I could feel myself regaining weight quickly→. The branch was finally budding.

Strolling into the living room, I found that everyone had already gathered there and was waiting eagerly for my arrival. If not for Dàgē's mighty presence, I would probably have been dragged here before I even had time to wash up and eat.

Dàgē sat down, sweeping the room with a warning look. At that, everyone quickly retracted their starving gazes and stopped staring at me like I was fresh meat.

"All right, what powers do you all have?"

Xiao Sha stated curtly, "I'm faster."

All the others had looks of frustration.

Seeing that, I knew that they were suspecting whether or not they had developed any powers at all. However, in the later stages of the apocalypse, it was proven that any human who survived the black fog would develop different powers. It was just that most of them weren't very strong, and it was especially difficult to discover the more exotic powers.

I opened my mouth and said, "Everyone, bring over a cup of water, a lighter, a rechargeable battery, a rock, another cup with soil in it, and anything else you can think of."

At that, everyone brightened and immediately split up to gather those

items. Soon, the table was covered with a collection of miscellaneous items.

I thought for a moment, then put the cup of water in the middle of the table. The power to control water was fairly common, probably because one could not survive without water.

"One by one, fix your eyes on the water and then touch the water with a finger. Think about wanting to move the water. Do this for a minute or so."

Everyone's curiosity was piqued. They formed an orderly line to do so, and soon enough, we discovered Ceng Yunqian had power over water.

She had almost used up the full minute when, just as she was about to give up and pull out her finger, the water exploded.

Zheng Xing had the power of earth. The moment he touched the soil, those soil particles started bouncing around.

Lily tried various things but couldn't get anything to happen. Just when she was feeling discouraged, I asked her to stand by the window to see how far she could see. In that instant, she almost fell over, shrieking that her vision had definitely exceeded 5.0.

As for Cain, I had my own guesses, so I simply took the lighter to burn him directly. He let me do it with a grin, not resisting in the slightest, but then discovered, to his surprise, that he wasn't burned.

As expected, he had power over fire. Powers over water and fire were

the most common in the apocalypse, but there was a huge disparity between the strong and the weak. The weak could only conjure enough to rinse your mouth or be used as a replacement for matches, but the strong were unbelievably powerful.

I informed him, "You're not completely immune to fire. As you become more powerful, your resistance to heat will increase. But don't think that at your current level, you can walk into a big fire just like that."

Cain gave a sharp exclamation and said gratefully, "I was just thinking of setting a bonfire to burn myself. Good thing I didn't make a fool of myself."

I turned my gaze to Xiao Sha, who frowned a little and repeated, "I said, I'm faster."

I pointed at the electrical fan. "Think about wanting to move the blades of that fan, or you can even blow hard at it."

Xiao Sha started, his brows creasing with what looked like displeasure. A shock ran through me. *Does he already know his ability but wants to hide it?* It wasn't strange to hide your true power in the apocalyptic world. If I'd realized this earlier, I wouldn't have exposed him and have him resent me for nothing.

He blew hard. Before the blades of the fan even started moving, everyone immediately knew his power—with a breath that ruffled even our hair, this was clearly the power of wind.

"I owe you one," Xiao Sha said grudgingly.

I looked at him, not understanding his meaning.

"Xiao Sha's debts are worth a lot," Zheng Xing said amusedly, "He was once indebted to me before, and boy, did I get a lot back in return. He hates owing people the most."

I see. So he wasn't unhappy that I exposed his power?

Next were Uncle and Auntie. Until now, they hadn't been able to move anything.

I thought hard about what other abilities there were and how we could figure them out.

Auntie finally blurted, "Xiao Yu, I feel like I can sense you guys. It's hard to describe, but it's like I know roughly where you are without looking."

I understood immediately and nodded, explaining, "That's 'search,' a psychic power. It's very handy! You can use it to avoid danger, and it's quite an uncommon power."

This power could be further developed, but I hadn't been in a position to know the exact details about those people with psychic powers. There were not many of them to begin with, and every single one of them was viewed as an important figure and was well-protected by their group. This was especially the case for those who had managed to develop their powers further.

When she heard that she could avoid danger with it, Auntie looked extremely delighted over her power. I felt a little more energized myself. Even though we were such a small group, we were able to have a rare user of psychic abilities. The future was looking bright! "And Uncle?" I asked, "Do you feel anything unusual?"

"None whatsoever," Uncle sighed. "Maybe I don't have any powers?"

"Everyone has powers," I said, shaking my head. "Some powers are just more difficult to discover. Don't worry, Uncle. Those hard-to-detect abilities are usually very unique and useful abilities. You just need a little more time, so don't be anxious. And anyway, we've got Dàgē!"

Uncle nodded. Probably because he was wise with age, he wasn't too concerned about matters like this.

In my previous life, those people with no abilities were the first to be kicked out of any group, unless someone powerful was willing to protect them. It was only afterwards that we discovered these abandoned people often had irreplaceable abilities.

Powers over water and fire were the easiest to discover. However, because many people had these powers, they weren't anything special. If they didn't train hard to become more powerful, they would be quickly replaced by someone else. Rather, it was those people abandoned right at the beginning who had the most precious abilities. But unfortunately, very few survived.

Finally, there was just the three of us siblings left.

I hadn't tried anything yet, but Dàgē and Mèimei had also participated in the tests with no luck so far.

But that was fine. Whether or not Shujun had powers, she was my most precious little sister.

As for Dàgē, no one had the thought that he wouldn't have an ability. The reason we couldn't find it now was probably because his power was moving The Earth or something just as mighty.

Shujun pouted, complaining, "I want a power."

"Keep trying, you definitely have one," I consoled her, holding absolute confidence in her.

Shujun looked at the table littered with things. She had gone through almost everything. Finally, after a little thought, she picked up the battery...

With a bang, the battery actually exploded. Startled, she threw away the battery, while me and Dàgē immediately snatched up her hand in fear to inspect it. Thankfully, she had only received a minor burn, and her skin was just a little red. It wasn't serious at all.

When I got over the initial shock, I was stunned.

The power of lightning! This was top-tier in terms of attack power.
Mèimei, I didn't know you were so aggressive?

Shujun said excitedly, "Is it electricity?"

I nodded, clarifying, "Lightning. It's very strong." Looking at my cute and gentle Mèimei in front of me, I really couldn't bring myself to start raving about its destructive power!

Shujun asked delightedly, "So can I recharge things?"

Of course she could use her ability to recharge things, but she needed to learn control. Otherwise, the appliances would explode, just like the battery. I nodded.

Shujun swooned. "That's great. Now, even if we don't have any more gas, I can use the electric stove to cook. And since the weather's so hot now, I can keep the air-conditioner on for Èrgē, so you won't wake up all hot and sticky."

...

Fine, cooking and air conditioning and what-have-you are indeed quite compatible with the power of lightning.

"Xiao Yu, look at this light I've produced. What power is this?"

Dàgē stuck out his hand. There was a ball of light about the size of an egg on his palm, a warm glow that was gentle on the eyes.

I stared at that light. Actually, it was something that I was very familiar with. But I had to be wrong. No way it could be *that* power!

"Dàgē, did you think about what power you wanted?"

I truly believed that for someone as mighty as Dàgē, who had the words "I am the protagonist" plastered across his forehead, the gods would definitely give him whatever power he wanted, no questions asked!

Dàgē nodded and placed that egg-sized light on my shoulder. That spot instantly felt warm and nice, but my expression darkened. Dàgē immediately moved his hand away, asking anxiously, "Does this light make you feel uncomfortable?"

"...No, it feels very good."

It was just that, for a main character as mighty as Dàgē, only powers as devastating as lightning that could obliterate everything or those that could level mountains and toss the seas could match up to him!

So why?!

How could it be?

No way is it possible!

How could Dàgē's ability be—healing!

Couldn't it at the very least have been power over fire!

"This is the ability to heal, right?" Dàgē asked to make sure.
I nodded miserably.

Dàgē gave a faint smile and immediately placed his hands on my shoulders. They started glowing, and this time, the light wasn't the size of an egg anymore but large enough to cover my entire shoulder.

This is overkill!

Thinking back, that Xiao Qi's healing power at the beginning was only as large as a diamond—and just ten carats was precious enough.

As for Dàgē, his was the size of two human heads! One head for each shoulder. Even if it was healing, Dàgē was still godly!

But in the end, healing is still healing...

Seeing Dàgē staring closely at my shoulders, completely focused on releasing the healing light, I suddenly understood.

He wanted to heal me, so it was the power to heal?

That's too stupid, Dàgē. I'll get better after a while, but your power is something that's fixed for life!

I really wanted to cry again, but I held it in. *You're a man now. If you cry at the smallest of things, even I wouldn't be able to take it.*

"Dàgē, I'll be sure to use my ability to protect you!"

The moment the words left my lips, the entire house directed disdainful looks at me.

"... Sorry, it must be the tile from before. It knocked me silly enough to make me think Dàgē needs my protection."

Everyone nodded. *Sob sob...*

"Xiao Yu, what about you? You know already, don't you? Don't keep us guessing." Dàgē gazed at me knowingly as he continued to heal me. I smiled faintly and reached out a finger to touch the cup of water on the table.

"Is it water, like me?" Ceng Yunqian said excitedly, "That's great! Then Xiao Yu can teach me."

With a cracking noise, the cup of water turned into ice.



With their powers as their new toys, everyone started training very hard, but no one was more serious than Jiang Shutian. He would heal me every day, as regularly as having three meals plus a late night snack. Every time, he kept it up until he was so mentally fatigued he couldn't let out even the faintest glow.

And so I ended up in a situation where every day Dàgē would sit behind me and use his healing powers on my shoulders, while Junjun would sit in front of me and force feed me chicken soup with a spoon. If I insisted on rejecting the chicken soup, then it would become medicinal soup.

Ever since Zheng Xing announced that I was able to eat meat, and I

needed to replenish my protein, even more foods were stuffed into my mouth.

Have you ever seen pigs being fattened up? It was exactly like that! Shujun and Auntie were busy with household chores every day. With so many people in the house, the number of chores to do naturally increased. Shujun didn't look like she was practicing her powers at all. She had also said that, with Dàgē and Èrgē around, she didn't need to be too strong, so it was more practical for her to help Auntie with the chores.

But I felt that she really would turn out to be the most powerful person in this house—excepting Dàgē.

Have you ever seen someone powering the rice cooker as she cooks?

Have you ever seen someone powering the washing machine while putting up the laundry to dry?

Have you ever seen someone powering the air conditioning while sleeping?

She was a walking electrical generator, charging things wherever she went! Even Xiao Sha took his iPad to her for charging, because he wanted to listen to music and play games!

In my previous life, I really hadn't seen anyone who was able to master their ability to this extent within just half a month. The average lightning user would most likely have busted all the electrical appliances they touched.

I woefully poked at the glass of beer in front of me. As Lily happily walked away with her iced beer, Zheng Xing was standing next in line, holding a cup of Darjeeling, and after that was Cain, with his Coca-Cola.

So we could live out the apocalypse like this too! Thinking back to my previous life of living on the run, it was pretty tragic. So that was why preparations were extremely important—and even more importantly, you had to have a Dàgē.

Although I was describing things as pretty care-free, in reality, Dàgē and his team were continually searching for supplies nearby. Even though the basement was crammed full of supplies, we would run out at some point, especially in terms of our consumption of food, so Dàgē had already started searching the neighborhood in preparation.

Fortunately, this was the suburbs, so there weren't that many humans, animals, or plants. Naturally, there weren't that many aberrants either, and Dàgē would always gloss over it, saying that those aberrants weren't hard to handle.

My guess was that some of them should still have gotten injured, but either Dàgē patched them up, or they simply didn't bring up the matter. After all, Dàgē's healing powers were all used up on me, I didn't know if he could still squeeze out any remnants to heal the others.

In just three days, I could feel that my body had improved greatly. I finally had some flesh on my cheeks, and I could stand up and move.

It was just that, the moment I stood up, I would be forced back into the wheelchair by Junjun. Aside from the nourishment and Dàgē's healing ability, the black fog had contributed to my recovery too—all living organisms that survived the black fog would be exceptionally robust.

"Dàgē, how are you guys dealing with the aberrant corpses?" I asked curiously.

"We buried them all," Dàgē paused, then asked in return, "I forgot to ask you. Burying them should be fine, right? We tried burning them before, but there was too much smoke and the stench of it often attracted other aberrants, so after that we buried them instead. Nothing will happen to those corpses?"

I smiled as I said, "No, burying them is fine."



In the middle of the night, I glanced to one side to see Shujun sound asleep. Quietly, I snuck into the next room, which was my original room. The mess inside seemed to have been cleaned up by Dàgē and the others.

I silently took down the bars of the windows. During the day, when Shujun was busy cooking, I seized the opportunity to sneak in here. I replaced the bars, which were originally stainless steel, with bars of ice.

This was currently the only room where no one was sleeping in. Dàgē said that I would have my own room back when I was a little better. I couldn't keep sleeping in Shujun's room forever.

I moved as silently as possible. After all, Jiang Shutian's companions were all mercenaries, so they were very skilled, very alert, and had a terrific sense of teamwork. This was the main reason why a group like us could pass our days leisurely in the apocalypse. Even if we hadn't stocked up on so many supplies, they would still have had their ways of getting hold of sufficient supplies; it would just be that we wouldn't be living so well off.

Secretively doing something under the nose of these mercenaries was no simple task, but I was Guan Weijun, a woman who had survived ten whole years in the apocalyptic world with just the measly power of good vision!

Speaking of skills, I definitely would not lose to them. It was just that no matter how strong the soul was, I was limited by how weak my body was. I could not pull off too many difficult stunts.

But so long as Jiang Shuyu makes a full recovery, with a little training, he would definitely be much stronger than Guan Weijun. Even though I was still quite weak, I could feel I had a fair bit of power. With a fine body such as this together with my ice powers, becoming one of the powerhouses wasn't just a pipedream.

Once out of the house, using the darkness of night as cover, I lightly flipped over the walls of a number of houses. I chose a house that was some distance from home and climbed over the wall. I easily found the "burial site." Dàgē and the others didn't bother concealing their tracks, probably because they didn't feel the need to.

I stretched out both hands and focused my entire being on them. Slowly, a piece of ice formed between my palms, growing longer by the moment. Soon, a piece of ice the shape of a shovel was completed.

The Jiang family's bloodline is unbelievable!

Thinking back, in the first half month into the apocalypse, although everyone started discovering the existence of special powers, these powers were weaker than a scalpel. At the time, the most practical power was water, because the water could be drunk, solving one of the basic needs of the human body. As for attacking or fighting, forget it—you were better off picking up a rock and throwing it.

I never imagined that Jiang Shuyu could form an ice shovel. Together with Dàgē's healing powers and Shujun, the walking electricity generator, the Jiang family's powers were very formidable!

These geniuses were probably much stronger than "him," not to mention Guan Weijun... As expected, comparing things can really piss you off.

With no time to lose, I started digging into the earth with the shovel. Thankfully, they weren't buried deep, and it was only a moment's work to excavate three aberrants' corpses.

The three corpses were already rotting, and the stench was quite unbearable. I once again crafted a small ice knife, and when I sliced open one aberrant's chest, the stench billowed right into my face. But I couldn't care less and started dissecting the corpses with even more fervor until I saw the aberrant's heart. It already didn't look like a

normal heart but was abnormally large, surrounded by many swollen veins.

I stabbed downwards into the center of the heart and broke open a round shell that wasn't originally there with familiar ease. One twist into the shell, and a translucent crystal the size of a finger nail fell into my palm.

Aberrants ate flesh and blood to evolve. It was only a long while later that humans discovered there were evolution crystals in the aberrants' hearts and that eating these would speed up their own evolution, just like how eating flesh and blood would speed up the aberrants'.

In my past life, I discovered these crystals during close combat with one of the aberrants. I was pushed to the ground, and I fired numerous shots directly into his chest, firing until his chest was gaping open.

Back then, amidst the intense stench of blood, I caught a whiff of something fragrant, something even more appetizing than food. With courage I didn't know I had, I reached into the broken chest cavity to dig out the crystal. Instinctively, I knew this was something real good.

The aberrants must have been the same. They must have always felt that we smelled very good, so they instinctively knew they needed to eat us, which resulted in our relentless slaughter of each other.

But because of humans' fear of aberrants, coupled with the fact that even if we did win the fight, the aberrants' corpses would likely end up being a bloody lump of flesh, most people avoided the corpses with

revulsion. No one bothered searching the corpses, so humanity simply wasn't aware of the existence of the evolution crystals at the beginning stages of the apocalypse.

Plants and animals didn't have these inhibitions. Their basic instincts were to eat. So even if, at the start, they might have fought back against the aberrants only when they were attacked, once they devoured the loser's flesh and blood as food, they discovered the existence of the evolution crystals.

So regardless of whether it was the aberrants, plants, or animals, their speed of evolution was always one step ahead of humanity's, causing countless people to die during the apocalypse.

It was only until almost ten years into the apocalypse that the situation took a turn for the better. With the appearance of the most elite powerhouses among humans, humanity finally had room to breathe and was able to build large communities.

In this life, I've started eating crystals right from the very beginning of the apocalypse. Together with Jiang Shuyu's superb body, I would definitely become one of those elites!

I kept these evolution crystals a secret from the others.

I dug out three crystals from the three corpses, though the first was the largest—the other two were just tiny fragments.

Looking down at the evolution crystals in my hand, one big and two small, I was reminded of our three siblings. If I gave the largest to

Dàgē, he would definitely become stronger.

Although Dàgē's power was healing, evolution crystals didn't just strengthen our powers but also our body. Of all humanity's powerhouses I knew, there were also those who weren't reliant on their powers but were renowned for their excellent physique and combat skills.

I gazed at the three crystals rolling around in my palm.

In my previous life...

I had given the first crystal that I had discovered to him, then all the crystals that we subsequently hunted together were also given to him. I only ate the leftovers, because he had said that he would be able to protect me once he became stronger, and he could keep me from staining my hands with blood for survival.

And in the end?

In the end!

In the end—

I swallowed the largest evolution crystal in a gulp.

The reason why I had ice powers in this life must be because my heart was as cold as ice. No matter how well Jiang Shutian and Jiang Shujun treated me, even though their attitudes hadn't changed the slightest even after they learned about Guan Weijun, I still wanted to keep the

power within my own two hands.

I would never give the chance of becoming stronger to anyone else in this life.

Later, I would tell them about the evolution crystals. But until then, I would first eat a certain number of crystals.

After swallowing the remaining two crystals, perhaps because my ice powers had strengthened, I felt my heart grow colder.



In the next few days, I went out every night to dig up corpses and dissect hearts. I finally felt like I was back in the apocalypse. Ever since Dàgē came back, the days passed by so leisurely that I was scared, worried that I would become used to such an easy way of living.

But this kind of life couldn't continue forever—aberrants, plants, and animals were growing stronger by the day, and there were looters as well. Although we were quite a strong group, there would always be much stronger ones out there. From what I knew, the various military groups were the most frightening factions out there.

To the average person, the military was a lifesaver. However, for groups like ours which had plentiful supplies and could take care of ourselves, the military would become the looters taking away our supplies.

I had to get stronger as quickly as possible.

As I was scrubbing myself in the shower, I glanced at the mirror to check the condition of my body. But I couldn't resist being drawn in by that face of mine—Jiang Shuyu really was very handsome. Although I could tell he had handsome looks when I had recovered to the state of a branch, now that my body had improved further to that of a paper doll, he looked even more handsome. If my body weight was back to normal, I wonder how handsome I'd become.

This Jiang family really was a bloodline of protagonists: Dàgē was handsome and almighty, Mèimei was beautiful and good-hearted, and Jiang Shuyu, the middle child, was incredibly handsome. When just going by his face and not the overall impression he gave, he was even better looking than his Dàgē.

Only, even if he trained up his body, he would probably lose to Dàgē by miles.

Looking further down, he lost in terms of length by a fair amount as well...

What the hell am I thinking of? I'm even comparing sizes down there now!

Guan Weijun, it's not like you haven't seen men before! Stop staring down below! And you're even recalling what you saw on Dàgē's lower body in the bath last time and actually comparing sizes! You're a total, complete, and utter pervert!

I quickly pulled myself together. Getting a nosebleed while looking at

Dàgē was bad enough, but if I got a nosebleed while looking at myself, then I was really a hopeless case.

I pulled on some clothes and exited the bathroom to see Shujun standing outside, waiting for me.

"What's up?" I felt like she had something to say.

Shujun hesitated before asking cautiously, "Gē, where were you last night? When I woke up to go to the bathroom, you weren't in bed."

My heart skipped a beat, but I pretended like it was no big deal as I said, "You guys keep making me rest all day. I couldn't sleep much at night after sleeping so much during the day, so I went out for a stroll to look at the stars. Now that there's not much light pollution, the night sky is very pretty."

Shujun went "Ah" and stopped her line of questioning. Instead, today's chicken soup was immediately thrust at me.

It felt like I was getting punished. I silently finished the chicken soup and decided to hurry. I still had to go out that night.

Shujun had already started getting suspicious. I wasn't sure when she would report this to Dàgē, which would mean I would have to confess everything—Dàgē would never believe an excuse like going out stargazing.

Before confessing the truth, I needed to eat a few more crystals. Late at night, I headed out the same as before and dug up the corpses

with the ice shovel that I formed. Recently, it was getting harder and harder to find any burial sites, so I had probably found almost all of them already. That meant I probably didn't need to come out any more after tonight, and I could just stay at home to practice my ice powers. Then, when I got the chance, I'd tell them about the crystals. Perhaps using the excuse of seeing a dream "again" isn't half bad. It would be fine as long as I said it had to be "fresh" aberrants, then they wouldn't come digging up the aberrant corpses.

After a good deal of digging, I only ended up with one piece of evolution crystal. But this crystal was the length of a thumb, which meant that this family didn't just have one aberrant, but rather, they were all eaten by this fellow. That was why he had such a large evolution crystal.

Just as I was about to swallow it, I heard some sounds and frantically gripped the shovel tighter. I turned, about to swing down the shovel, only to see Dàgē pushing open the gates to the garden and walking in. My heart pounded furiously—they'd found out!

"Shuyu, what are you doing?"

Behind Dàgē were the rest of the mercenary troop. Their expressions were quite grim as they looked between me and the pitifully dissected corpses. They stared at me like I was some kind of zombie. If I roared a few times, they might really start shooting at me.

I hesitated. If I didn't explain myself properly, I didn't think they would let me off. There was no way I could pass this off as sleepwalking... Only aberrants would believe that sort of lie! So I just

played it straight with the whole truth about the evolution crystals.

When I was finished, Dàgē's expression was very stormy. I had never seen him look at me or Shujun with that kind of expression before.

"So you monopolized them?" Ceng Yunqian raged as she accused me, "Do you know how much effort it took to defeat these aberrants? And now you've stolen all the benefits on the back of *our* efforts?"

"I..." I grounded my teeth, trying explain myself, "Anyway, you'd never have discovered these evolution crystals yourselves. Now that I've said it, at least you can start eating from now on—"

Dàgē growled, "Shuyu!"

I stopped. No one else spoke, but their expressions were all very unpleasant: some were furious, some were condemning, and some were even scornful.

I suddenly realized I didn't have any place in this mercenary troop. Even though I had predicted the coming of the apocalypse, stocked up on heaps of supplies, and even taught them how to discover their powers, even if this mercenary troop didn't have me, they'd probably be able to survive quite well in the Arctic.

Perhaps, they probably had a bigger stock of weapons and bullets there. After all, they had only had a few hours to get hold of weapons and bullets after flying over to Meisia, so their supplies certainly couldn't compare to how much they had in the Arctic when they were

about to go on their mission.

As long as you had adequate weapons and supplies, you had nothing to worry about.

And special powers at this stage weren't much more useful than a scalpel. With guns and knives in their hands, special powers were probably nothing more than an interesting toy in their eyes. What's more, this weak body of mine was a massive burden from the very beginning. If this troop had stayed in the Arctic, they wouldn't have had to babysit commoners who couldn't fight like me, Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie. They were all mercenaries, and the whole mercenary troop should have had more people, as not everyone would have followed Jiang Shutian over here.

Impressions were hard to change. From now on, this squad would probably think of me as someone who was a burden, and a selfish bastard who also caused them to lose lots of useful comrades and bullets.

I lifted my hand and quickly tossed the evolution crystal into my mouth.

"Shuyu!" Dàgē finally showed his fury, roaring, "What are you doing! You weren't so selfish in the past."

My past self...

I felt like something shattered in my heart. In the past, I was indeed no way as selfish as I was now. The Guan Weijun at the beginning of

the apocalypse was truly “naïve.” Nowadays, I couldn’t believe that I had survived those times back then. You could say I had been incredibly lucky.

But Dàgē wasn’t talking about “that past,” but the past Jiang Shuyu. Judging from Jiang Shutian’s and Jiang Shujun’s personalities, Jiang Shuyu was likely a fine example of a young man. But I wasn’t that perfect Jiang Shuyu, but rather, the Guan Weijun who had survived ten years in the apocalypse. I weathered countless betrayals and, in the end, I was abandoned to the aberrants and ripped to shreds. I was a woman whose heart and body were rotten to the very core.

I stopped looking at them and strode past Jiang Shutian. *Anyway, I ate it already, so what’s he going to do? Cut open his Dìdì’s belly and dig it out?*

“Shuyu, where are you going?”

From behind me, Dàgē’s shout made my steps falter. I said flatly, “Home to sleep,” then continued to walk away.

Chapter #6: Turning Ice into a Weapon

The first thing I did when I got home was go the basement to take the knives we had previously bought. All ten knives were still there, probably because Dàgē and his gang weren't interested in the crappy kinds purchased from a department store. I also took a medical kit and a big pile of dry goods before heading back to my room.

My room was a complete mess, and the hospital bed was still in Shujun's room. Nonetheless, there was still the single bed that was originally in this room, just that it had been shoved to one side to make room for the hospital bed.

I spent the better part of half a day tidying up the room. Even after doing so, I didn't feel very tired. My current body was as expected, becoming better. I hadn't eaten so many evolution crystals for nothing. Although I looked only marginally better than a paper doll, I was close to recovering my full strength.

Just as I was about to catch up on some sleep after wiping myself down, I heard a knock at the door. Startled, I reflexively snatched up a knife.

"Èrgē, it's Shujun."

I froze and asked, "What's up? I'm about to sleep."

"O-oh, then I won't keep you up. Good night."

I was suddenly buffeted by waves of intense disappointment—*am I*

hoping Shujun would come in? I was silent for a moment before remembering that I needed to respond. "Night," I called out, but I didn't know if she'd already left.

I quietly settled on the floor. My activities had been very secretive and shouldn't have alerted anyone. If Dàgē knew, it was highly likely that Shujun was the one who had told him.

I felt conflicted, but then again, I had to admit to thinking too much of myself. Shutian and Shujun were real siblings, whereas I was nothing in comparison, nothing more than a body snatcher and a fake. *I'm lucky enough that I haven't been gunned down, so why did I think I was in the position to hold myself up against them?*

Giving an embarrassed laugh at my stupidity, I stood up and put away the medical kit, then hid the knives in various parts of the room. After that, I locked the door. Although someone had the key out there, just the sound of the key turning in the lock would be enough to wake me. If I could just get back half the power and alertness of Guan Weijun, even if I couldn't win, I could still make a clean escape from mercenaries like these.

I slipped the last knife under my pillow, and it was only then that I was able to comfortably drift asleep.

Finally, the sense that the apocalypse had struck was back.

Happy days would never last. This was an immutable fact in every universe out there.



The next day, I still headed downstairs to eat. The supplies in the room were just a precaution. After all, I couldn't just hole up all day in the room. That wasn't practical.

The moment I stepped into the living room, the chatter died down for a moment. Only Uncle and Auntie remained oblivious, and Auntie even called out to me, "Xiao Yu, quick, come eat."

I made an assenting noise and sat next to Shujun, who kept her head down as she ate, not daring to look my way.

Jiang Shutian didn't have any of the anger on his face from yesterday, and he spoke like nothing was wrong. "Xiao Yu, about those evolution crystals. Is there any kind of restriction on eating them we should be aware of?"

"No." I paused, then elaborated, "Generally, no. There might be some special evolution crystals out there, but I don't know anything about them."

In the previous world, Guan Weijun had no way of obtaining those special evolution crystals. I couldn't even get my hands on the higher tier crystals. Although "he" had gotten quite a number of higher tier crystals himself, there was never enough between him eating the crystals and granting awards to his subordinates. So, there was simply no way there would ever be any for me to eat.

There were lots of rumors going around back then that were difficult to verify as truthful. For example, it was said that there would be issues

if you ate crystals that were too high tiered compared to yourself. But a lot of rumors were fakes. In the case of the high tiered crystals, it was possible that the rumor-mongers wanted to prevent others from eating the high tiered crystals the very moment they got a hold of them. That way, they would have a chance of stealing the crystals. In any case, it was unlikely that there would be overly high tiered crystals in the early days of the apocalypse, so there was no real need to mention these rumors. If they turned out to be false, then it would just cause unnecessary trouble and further distrust.

"How could there be any restrictions when he's already eaten so many?" Ceng Yunqian said drily, "Does he not know, or is he keeping something to himself?"

"Yunqian, this fish is really good. Here, try some," Lily took a piece of fish and placed it into Ceng Yunqian's bowl, while kicking her under the table. Although this was done very subtly, I still noticed. The others didn't speak, and Jiang Shutian didn't ask further either. At the same time, he didn't say anything to Ceng Yunqian and simply said in a mild manner, "Let's eat."

Everyone started eating quietly, and it was quite a while before casual conversation resumed. Uncle and Auntie looked a bit bemused, Shujun kept her head down toward to the rice bowl the entire time, and I ate in silence.

"Evolution crystals can be used to improve your powers, and they also strengthen the body."

Finishing my food quickly, I left them with that one sentence and

immediately returned to my room, not even bothering to clean up after myself.

Back in my room, I picked up a knife and inspected it. This knife really wasn't very good quality. No wonder Jiang Shutian and the others didn't care for them. And in any case, they had their guns.

The average person would prefer to shoot at aberrants from a distance when dealing with these unknowns. No one would ever want to approach them. So in the first two years of the apocalypse, everyone fought over guns and ammunition and failed to realize that they were wasting two years of precious time for practicing their special powers.

In the third year of the apocalypse, regular guns became scrap metal and failed to penetrate the shells of the aberrants. Bullets that were not imbued with any fire or water powers, were, at most, helping aberrants scratch their itches. Aberrants would even ask you to fire, like "oh hey, two more shots on my left. It's quite itchy there"—by then, they really were able to talk.

Although Guan Weijun's pathetic abilities were useless, because I had come to know of many powers, I knew how the future would develop and wouldn't repeat those mistakes again. For example, relying on guns and foolishly thinking that powers were only used for at best a mouthful of water or starting a fire. And this knowledge was extremely precious.

I twirled the knife. Actually, the knife was just a base, so the quality didn't make much difference.

Concentrating my entire being, I squeezed hard with one hand. Crackling sounds came non-stop from the center of the palm. Soon, the knife was covered in layers of ice. But this was not the final result I wanted. This ice crystal was too fragile, not much better than the knife itself.

I struggled to compress those ice crystals. This was quite difficult, taking up the whole afternoon. I only took a break in between to quickly gobble down some dinner, before returning to experiment into the night. It was only at midnight that I finally succeeded.

But I never imagined that after compression, the thick layer of ice would be reduced to a thin membrane of ice, even thinner than plastic wrap. It was virtually invisible. This was insane. *Just how many layers of ice would I have to freeze and compress before it becomes somewhat more substantial?*

Knocking off the excess fragments, I had no choice but to continue freezing the knife and compressing it. Although I wanted to do it a number of times, compressing the ice was much harder than creating an ice shovel or an ice dagger. So, the maximum number of times I could do it was just once more, and that was enough to give me a splitting headache.

Calling it a day, I slipped the knife under the pillow and slept. The battle would continue tomorrow.

Lying on the bed, my head throbbed with pain, and I couldn't get a single wink of sleep. So, I gave up on sleeping and started thinking back to the past, hoping I could remember more useful information.

I had once seen the Ice Emperor's battle.

The Ice Emperor was one of the elites in the apocalypse. He had an ice sword, made of nothing but ice. Yet it was harder than diamond—although, in the apocalypse, diamond was no longer the hardest substance out there.

"He" suspected that that was perma-ice leftover from repeated practice of his ice powers, and even pointlessly insisted on calling it diamond ice. *That ice was something the Ice Emperor created and he had never called it diamond ice, so why on earth did he insist on naming it?*

Anyway, we had watched the Ice Emperor's battle against an aberrant. Even from a long distance away, we could feel the terrifying, earth shattering power of the elite. He had said in a tone that was both wistful and envious that he would one day be even more powerful than the Ice Emperor.

Even though his powers were top tier in this district, compared to true elites, it was like comparing a mouse with an elephant. But at the time, I had even consoled him, saying "you will be stronger than the Ice Emperor. It's just a matter of time." Thinking back, I really wanted to kill my stupid past self.

But that was the one and only time that I had been thankful that my power was enhanced vision.

The energies given off by the elite were so strong it was impossible to draw close at all. To ensure our survival, we had no choice but to

watch the battlefield from far, far away. But because of my good vision, I could just about make out the details of that battle.

That was the most beautiful battle I had ever seen. All sorts of beautiful, translucent ice crystals glittered under the sunlight. Even if the ice encased bits of blood or flesh, they still looked like beautiful and vivid ice sculptures.

As for the Ice Emperor, although I couldn't make out his features properly, those agile movements, his incredible speed and power...

Before drifting off into slumber, I thought back to the Ice Emperor's longsword and decided that I needed a long weapon on top of my knife. I could probably get a broom tomorrow and use the handle as a base.

Oh Ice Emperor...

Am I worthy enough in this life to even dare dream of becoming you?



It was the fifth day of my struggle with making weapons and the twentieth day of the apocalypse. I finally created the knife and the staff. Although the perma-ice wasn't even a centimeter thick, it was incredibly hard. These two weapons were like strands of hair before the Ice Emperor's ice sword, but they were more than enough twenty days into the apocalypse.

I strapped the knife to my lower leg and stuffed the staff into a backpack. My plan was to join the staff together when the need arose. Although combining it on the spot would make the joints weaker, it

really was too conspicuous to walk around with something that long. Besides, it would be cumbersome to carry.

As I had said before, this was plenty enough twenty days into the apocalypse. Even the weakest part, the joint, was at least as hard as steel.

It was still broad daylight. Of course, I'd be better off sneaking away in the middle of the night. But now, I couldn't sneak around anymore, unless I wanted to risk raising people's suspicions. So, I just stepped out of the house boldly. At most, when I returned, I'd just say I was bored and went to find supplies.

In any case, so many days had passed already, so even if there were burial sites I hadn't found earlier, they would have been dug up long ago for the crystals. So, there was no way for them to accuse me of stealing the loot from others' battles!

I wandered a little way down the road from the front door. After double checking that I couldn't be seen from the house, I found a car, smashed the window, and started the engine. Hotwiring a car was a basic skill that even five year-olds in the apocalyptic world could pull off with ease.

While Jiang Shuyu had just turned eighteen and probably didn't even have a driver's license, Guan Weijun was already thirty-five. In the apocalypse, I had even driven a tank some distance before—not that there was any choice at the time. The soldier who was originally driving the tank had had his head twisted off by an aberrant, so even if I hadn't known how to drive one, I had to manage somehow!

I drove for some thirty minutes, fairly certain that Jiang Shutian and his troop wouldn't come so far out. After all, their first priority was clearing out the neighborhood of aberrants, while the search for supplies took a back seat.

The moment I stopped the car, I immediately slipped out of the driver's seat and ducked around a corner. Although the sound of the car was not loud, it was very clear in the deathly silence of the apocalypse and could easily attract certain types of aberrants.

As expected, several aberrants scrambled out and jumped up and down on the car. From the way they didn't butcher and cannibalize each other, it seemed that they had some other food source and weren't so hungry as to eat their own kind, unlike the muscle man who had eaten the nurse.

If I had a gun, I could immediately put a bullet in every one of their heads. But I wasn't planning to use one. Rather, I wanted to hone my powers and close combat skills.

Currently, I still wasn't very familiar with Jiang Shuyu's body. Additionally, this body had only experienced the black fog once and had just recovered from severe injuries, so I wasn't sure how much of Guan Weijun's combat power it could exhibit.

After a little thought, I leapt over a wall into a garden. This was another community that was quite similar to home, each house forming its own little space with the standalone houses and walled-off gardens.

I suspected that the aberrants had already grasped the concept of territories by now. So if they weren't sure of their victory, they wouldn't recklessly enter another aberrant's territory. This presented a great opportunity for me.

I pulled out the two halves of the ice staff from my backpack and froze them into one long staff. Then, I did a high jump with the staff, grabbed onto the railing of the second floor terrace with a hand, and pulled hard. With that, I was now safely on the second floor.

This body really is quite excellent.

Looking down at my arms, I saw that they were somewhat fleshier. Although they were a far cry from being muscular, a little more fighting and evolution crystals would be able to put more meat on those bones within a few days' time.

Using the staff, I nudged at the floor length window. Being unlocked, it slid open easily, and I climbed in with light feet. Only after I rested my backpack against the floor did I properly begin my search for aberrants.

I found them quickly enough. There were only two, and they were lounging on the long sofa in the living room, sleeping snuggled up to each other.

This wasn't strange at all. Just now, I'd seen a nearby river and a small grove, which probably had a fair amount of animals and plants for eating. As long as food wasn't a concern, it wasn't impossible for

aberrants to be at peace with each other. That said, it wasn't unusual for them to suddenly go wild and kill their counterpart either.

For now, the aberrants were still not mature, so it was fair to compare them to children with their mercurial tempers. Slowly, though, they would begin to assist each other and also form communities, and large gathering grounds would start to appear.

Ten years into the apocalypse, the world had divided into four factions—humans, animals, plants, and aberrants. Humans no longer dominated the planet, and they weren't even the strongest faction. From the start of the apocalypse right up to Guan Weijun's death, aberrants monopolized the position at the top of the power pyramid.

However, this was far off in the future and not something anyone could do anything about. I should just focus on the immediate present.

Two aberrants. Will I be able to deal with them?

I gripped my staff, feeling a little uncertain.

In the past, aside from guns, Guan Weijun wasn't particularly good at any other kind of weapon. At the beginning of the apocalypse, no one had proper weapons and simply used whatever was at hand. One moment, a cleaver would be used to slice meat, and the next, it would be used to cut down all sorts of evolved creatures. Or a bundle of sharpened broomsticks would be carried around for stabbing at aberrants. That was all pretty normal.

Back then, everything was in short supply. The most common

weapons were poles and knives, so I could in fact use staves. I wasn't half bad at it either. After all, in the later stages of the apocalypse, guns were useless, so if I didn't have some competence, I'd have died ten times in a minute. Like the saying goes, people's potential really does come out in times of crises.

Besides, the ice staff in my hand was no ordinary stick; it added frost damage when scoring a hit. I'd never had the chance to use such a good staff in the past. Guan Weijun had survived using just the handle of a broomstick, whereas now, Jiang Shuyu was holding onto an ice staff. If I still managed to die on the twentieth day into the apocalypse, then I damn well deserved it.

Judging from my own power, even if I couldn't win in a fight against the two aberrants, I would still be able to get away somehow. So I decided to leave my fate to the heavens, picked something off the floor, and flung it over to see how many aberrants there would be...
Ugh, if possible, please don't let a third one come running out.

Obviously, the heavens had decided to go easy on me today. Both aberrants stirred, but one was obviously lazier and simply shifted a little before settling back down. The other stood up and started heading toward me.

I threw something else, drawing him up to the second floor to give myself a bit more time. Hopefully, I'd be able to finish one off before starting combat with the second.

I wondered what type of aberrant it was, as he still maintained a human shape. I'd forgotten exactly when the aberrants started

developing all sorts of strange features, but at the current point in time, it was quite clear that most of them retained the shape of their host.

The majority of aberrants that settled in houses were originally human. There was a small minority which were pets-turned-aberrants, but most of them were devoured by the humanoid aberrants right from the get go. Newly awakened aberrants were very hungry, and the small pet aberrants were mostly weak. Although size did not always correlate with strength, it was still a fairly good indicator of power.

He was very skinny, so he probably wasn't a power type. Likewise, from how he only noticed me when I threw something, he wasn't any of the types with enhanced hearing, smell, or detection. From that, he was probably a speed type.

Aberrants' abilities were mainly centered on enhancing the body, and powers such as fire or water were much more uncommon as compared to humans.

I had a feeling that this disparity probably had its roots in novels, comics, and movies, which contributed in no small amount to people's daydreams. Floods drowning the Statue of Liberty, fires engulfing the skyscraper TAIPEI 101, wearing tight spandex over a muscular body and flying off into the sky, and so on.

I waited patiently just around the corner of the stairs. The moment the aberrant stepped onto the second floor, I swung down with the staff, but he twisted his head away right at the most critical moment. The ice staff grazed his cheek but still froze off a large chunk of his face,

making him howl in agony.

I missed the first strike, but I didn't allow myself to stop and immediately spun around and swept out a second blow. This time, I didn't aim for the head; he was too sensitive to attacks directed at his head, making it no easy target. Instead, I bent over and struck out, targeting his knee.

With an earsplitting crack, his leg snapped completely into two at my blow, the knee bending at a wholly unnatural angle with the bone jutting out through the flesh. It looked exceptionally disgusting. With a pained scream, he fell to the floor. Seeing my chance, I followed up with one downward swing of the staff. After a sound like a splattering watermelon, he was left slightly twitching on the ground.

I was eighty percent pleased with how the fight had gone. I was stronger than I'd imagined, and the evolution crystals I had eaten hadn't gone to waste. But the twenty percent of dissatisfaction came from the fact that I hadn't been able to split his head with the first strike of the staff. Then again, this was the first time I had attacked, and this body had only just recovered from its injuries, so I shouldn't be too hard on myself.

From below came the sound of thumping and a roar, signaling the arrival of the second aberrant.

And with it came its delectable gift of evolution crystals.

A smile tugged at my lips, and right at that moment, I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror of the dressing table opposite me. It

was a smile so dashing and handsome that it sent chills down my spine.



After speeding through three houses like a whirlwind, I decided to leave. It was about time that the aberrants discovered the abnormality, and it wouldn't be a joke if I got surrounded by a horde of aberrants. Back home, Jiang Shutian and his troop hadn't returned yet. Nothing seemed wrong with the house, so it was like I'd never left in the first place. Even Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie thought I was still in my room. But there had to be someone who was responsible for keeping watch in the attic, and there was no way that person could have missed me leaving the house.

So that person either doesn't give a shit about me, or they're probably hoping that I'd die out there, huh?

I don't know who is on watch today, but then again, does it really matter who it is?

The moment I got back to my room, I immediately wanted to shower. I'd gotten sprayed with the aberrants' blood during some of the earlier fights and reeked of blood.

But just as I opened the door, I heard rapid footsteps coming from Shujun's room. Her door opened and I saw her looking over. I immediately closed my door. The metallic smell of blood was too heavy. The moment Shujun came close, she would immediately start questioning what I had been doing out there.

If she knew that I was sneaking out to kill aberrants, wouldn't she immediately tattletale to Jiang Shutian? If so, that would make my excursions in the future even more difficult. This is a very critical time. I absolutely have to get my evolution crystals.

I listened at the door for a little while, wondering why there wasn't any knocking. I hesitated, but at the same time, I couldn't just open the door to check, so I gave up and went for a shower.

After the shower, I habitually checked out the mirror to see how my musculature was coming along. *Not bad at all.* I could no longer be described as a paper doll but instead had now become a grown boy who was just a bit on the skinny side.

I smoothed down my wet hair, which reached to my shoulders, and contemplated a haircut.

Looking for scissors, I opened the door and stopped, stunned. Shujun was standing there, her head hung low... *Don't tell me she has been standing there all along?*

I asked urgently, "What's wrong? You're looking for me?"

She didn't reply, to my bewilderment, so I could only continue asking, "Shujun?"

"Èrgē... do you blame me?"

Shujun kept her head down, so I couldn't see her expression, but I could see tears dripping onto the floorboards.

"I told Dàgē about you going out, and you two ended up arguing with each other. I was just, just worried that it was very dangerous, and I didn't want you to go out and get injured again. You finally just got better, and you finally don't look so skinny anymore..."

I hastily reassured her, "No, I don't blame you."

"Liar, then why have you been avoiding me?" Shujun looked up, her eyes red and tears still streaming down her face, and she desperately begged me, "Èrgē, I won't tell. I won't tell anything about you anymore. Even if Dàgē asks, I won't tell him! Just please don't ignore me."

I gaped, unable to explain myself. I had indeed been purposefully distancing myself from Shujun, but it wasn't because I blamed her. I was simply worried that she would be lumped with me by the others and be ostracized for it.

My cute and goodhearted Shujun had been taking care of an invalid like me ever since the apocalypse, and she worked hard at doing the housework too. *How could I possibly let anyone hate someone like her?*

"I really don't blame you." I gave her a light hug as I spoke. "It's just that no one trusts me right now, so don't get too close to me. Otherwise, I'm worried the others will take out their anger on you."

Hearing that, Shujun wiped at her tears, staring at me resolutely. "If they want to take it out on me, let them! You're my Èrgē! Whoever

hates you will have to hate me, too! And I won't cook for him or do his laundry!"

I laughed.

This little sister can't get any cuter! I love you, sis! Even if my soul is a woman's, I still want to marry you. Won't you give me a chance...?

Shujun watched my expression warily, then finally, she started smiling, teasing, "So Èrgē, you've forgiven me?"

"I never blamed you."

Shujun pouted. "Liar, you called me Shujun just now. Whenever you're angry, you stop calling me Junjun."

I was speechless. I had, in fact, let slip "Shujun" just now, but I had no idea where it had come from.

"Èrgē, you have to explicitly tell me that you're not angry with me; otherwise, I won't believe you."

I gave Shujun a look and pulled her into my room.

Shujun very naturally gravitated toward my bed and sat there, glancing around the room before saying unhappily, "Èrgē, you're being too lazy. The floor's all dirty, and you're just letting it be. I'll come help you sweep the floor later."

This Mèimei really is... I watched Shujun, feeling my heart clench. *You*

really are such a good little sister. Wouldn't it be amazing if I was truly your Èrgē?

"Junjun, why do you never suspect that I'm not your Èrgē? After I spoke about Guan Weijun, has it never crossed your mind that I might be a wandering spirit who has possessed your Èrgē's body?"

This direct line of questioning was something I dared to do with Shujun, but never with Jiang Shutian. I was scared that, if he really did think this way, other than running away, the only path left to me would be death.

But Shujun... For some reason, I'd always felt that she would never hurt me, no matter what.

Shujun stared at me with wide, wondering eyes, asking suspiciously, "Èrgē, did you hit your head somewhere again?"

Hearing that, I couldn't even feel tense anymore, and I said a little helplessly, "No. I'm being serious. You really haven't ever suspected me, not even once? Even I don't know myself... how I should view myself or you guys."

Shujun's expression immediately went blank, and she quietly looked at me, making me suddenly feel a little guilty. *Everything has been going so well, and these two siblings have never once suspected me, so why did I have to tear everything down?*

Jiang Shuyu has family, power, and looks. He really does excel at everything. Whereas Guan Weijun was just terrible, even at judging

people!

Why can't I just forget Guan Weijun and happily be Jiang Shuyu?

"Èrgē."

I reflexively looked down at Shujun. She suddenly grinned. "The moment I call you, you look at me. How can you say you're not my Èrgē?"

I forced a smile, "That's true. Never mind, pretend I never said any—" "Gē, you saved me." Shujun suddenly interrupted me, but I had no idea why she was bringing this up.

"The world became like this only three days after you woke up. You were so thin and weak, and everyone else was much healthier than you were. But all of us relied on you."

I chuckled. "That's because Dàgē wasn't here."

Shujun grumbled quietly, "Dàgē's never around, and Uncle and Auntie aren't home much either. It's always been just you and me."

You and me, but the "me" now is no longer that me.

"Èrgē, back then, when Lin-bó came rushing out of the basement, you pushed me in and even told us not to come out. Back then, I really thought you were dead for sure." Shujun's voice started shaking, her eyes reddened, and she said remorsefully, "Èrgē, you saved me, but I left you out there to die. I'm the one who doesn't deserve to be your

sister."

"Don't be silly!" I immediately retorted, "You are my good little sister. I was the one who told you not to come out. If you had opened the door, even Uncle and Auntie would've died! So no way could you have opened that door!"

Shujun wiped at the corner of her eyes and smiled.

"If you weren't my brother, then tell me, have you always been risking your life to save complete strangers? Gē, you may have lost your memories, but you really are my Èrgē." Shujun added in a quieter voice, "You have to be."

Hearing that last line, I understood. Whether or not I really was her Èrgē, she would always treat me as so.

I had saved her, Uncle, and Auntie, and nearly lost my life in the process. I had been so pitiful that I had looked like a withered branch, to the point where even the stoic Jiang Shutian had lost his composure upon seeing me, to say nothing of Shujun. *If I'm not her Èrgē, and am some lost soul who possessed her Èrgē, what can she do?*

Why the hell am I putting Shujun in such a difficult position? What on earth am I doing?

"I'm your Èrgē," I immediately apologized. "Sorry, I must have been knocked on my head really badly, so I couldn't even remember that. If I wasn't your Èrgē, there's no way I would've risked my life to save you guys. After all, there's no such things as saints who go around

rescuing others at the expense of their own lives."

"Yup!" Shujun nodded forcefully, looked at me, and suddenly leapt into my embrace and hugged me tightly, not letting go.

I have to be Jiang Shuyu.

I have to be.



Not unexpectedly, someone brought up the fact that I had left the house with Jiang Shutian at dinner. And the person who had been watching the house was not Ceng Yunqian, the person I had previously suspected, but Cain.

Jiang Shutian was extremely shocked and roared angrily, "Xiao Yu, where did you go? Do you think these are times when you can go running wherever you want?"

I said tonelessly, "It's too boring at home. I went out nearby to look for supplies."

"It's too dangerous! Even if we've cleared out all the aberrants in the area, there's no guarantee that we didn't miss some."

He didn't question whether I was up to some mischief again. I looked down, feeling a little relieved.

"You're grounded!" Jiang Shutian's tone brooked no argument.

I didn't reply, and merely ate my own dinner at my own pace. In any case, he would have to take out his troops at some point, and it didn't seem like the person left watching the house would have any intention of stopping me from running off to my death.

"Jiang Shuyu! Look at me!" Jiang Shutian hollered in absolute fury.

"Dàgē, don't be so angry!" Shujun exclaimed with alarm, "Èrgē's been in bed rest for almost two months, and he's been at home all day. He really is bored, so he went out for a walk nearby. He didn't stay out for long. Dàgē, don't be mad at him, Èrgē still isn't that well. I mean, look at him! He's still so skinny! What'll you do if you scare him too much?"

This unwell person had just gone and killed five aberrants this afternoon, you know.

Hearing that, Jiang Shutian looked me up and down, and then he actually started speaking in a gentler tone of voice, "If you're bored, join us tomorrow. Just don't go out by yourself."

Just as I was about to refuse, I had second thoughts. Perhaps I could instruct them on how to use their powers to attack, so they wouldn't be so reliant on guns. No matter what, it was good that the mercenary troop was quite powerful. Even if they didn't like me, it seemed that they really trusted Dàgē.

"Boss, we don't have manpower to spare to watch over a kid." Cain said with a wry smile, "Recently, the aberrants have become harder to handle, and it's not like we've got an unlimited supply of ammunition. We can't afford to waste any."

Ceng Yunqian added in an even more dissatisfied tone of voice, "If we take him out, do we have to count him in when splitting the evolution crystals?"

Count me in... I frowned, suddenly realizing that if they hadn't planned on sharing the evolution crystals with me, then wouldn't that mean that Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie, who didn't participate in the fighting, wouldn't get their share as well?

I shut my mouth, pretending to be infuriated by the conversation, and left with my bowl in hand.

"Shuyu!" Dàgē shouted as he sprang to his feet.

Hearing him, I immediately raced upstairs, not giving Dàgē any chance of stopping me and continuing to coax me into joining them on their outings.

In the middle of the night, I snuck into Shujun's room to ask. As expected, she hadn't gotten any share of the evolution crystals, and neither had Uncle or Auntie.

I frowned. From the looks of it, they only shared with combat participants. This really was unfair. Even though they weren't fighting, all the housework was done by the three of them, Uncle included. I could accept it if they received only a small share of the crystals, but not receiving any at all was really unfair.

Just as I was simmering with anger, I suddenly remembered the ten

years I had previously spent. No one would ever share the evolution crystals with those who did the housework. An organization where the people didn't immediately hide away and eat the crystals would already be considered a well managed one.

"Actually, Dàgē didn't get any either," Shujun whispered.

"What?" I was stupefied, and quickly asked, "Why's Dàgē not getting his share? He's the leader, and he's definitely joined in the fighting, so why isn't he getting any?"

Dàgē's power was healing, so it wasn't much use in a fight. And now he wasn't eating evolution crystals. Even if he was a protagonist, he still needed a chance to evolve in order to become invincible!

Shujun made an awkward face, saying quietly, "Because they're deducting against the crystals you ate."

I was stunned.

"Èrgē, Dàgē never blamed you for eating those things. Your quick recovery should be linked to them, so Dàgē is actually very happy. But it's not just about our family. Dàgē needs to take other people into consideration as well. So don't blame him."

"I'm not qualified to blame him," I said as I shook my head. "I'm not blaming him."

"Then, that's good," Shujun sighed with relief.

I'm just scared of him.

That line, "Shuyu, you never used to be like this," scares me. Has he started to feel that I'm not Jiang Shuyu? And some day, if he's certain that I'm not his younger brother, what would he do to me?

Just thinking about that sent chills down my spine.

I tried to rid myself of those frightening ideas. Dàgē was still doing his best by me, so even if I was a piece of ice, I'd still have thawed out.

I tugged out a chain from around my neck. This was something I'd found today. The pendant was a tiny bottle that was only five centimeters long, probably used to hold essential oils and such. I had fortified it with ice crystals. It was perfect for storing evolution crystals. I tipped out one crystal, saying, "Junjun, eat this."

Shujun stared at the evolution crystal lying in my palm, asking in confusion, "Èrgē, how'd you get—"

Halfway through the sentence, her eyes widened as she immediately realized its origins. And when she next looked at me, it was with considerable alarm.

I warned her, "Don't tell anyone! Especially Dàgē. Otherwise, I'll ignore you forever, and I'll even run away and only come back once or twice a month. I'm serious!"

Her expression turned troubled.

"Come on, just eat it."

Shujun shook her head, waving it away. "Èrgē, you should eat it instead. This is good for you."

"I recovered a long time ago. It's just that my muscle hasn't all grown back yet," I said firmly. "If you don't eat this, I'll throw it away right in front of you!"

Shujun had no choice but to swallow it.

"Junjun, go make three cups of hot tea. They have to be real hot. Then take them to Uncle, Auntie, and Dàgē to drink."

Shujun started and watched as I tipped out four more evolution crystals. Judging from her expression, she understood. *Good.*

"Put two in Dàgē's. You've got to make sure they drink it all. If they don't, you have to think of some way of making them finish it, but don't let them become suspicious."

"Okay." Shujun carefully accepted the four evolution crystals, and nodded seriously as she promised, "I'll make sure they finish their tea. These are hard to come by."

Her eyes had reddened.

After watching Shujun leave to make the tea, I returned to my own room, thinking hard as I strengthened the knife and staff with ice crystals.

Within the mercenary troop, Ceng Yunqian very obviously detested me, but I'd never imagined that that Cain, who was always full of smiles, was even more antagonistic toward me. If I really was an ordinary eighteen year old, my life would have been in danger if I ventured out of the house. But he turned a blind eye to this. This hostility of his was really too deep, to the point where it was starting to get dangerous.

As for the others, only Lily could be said to have even tried to smooth things over, but that was for Dàgē's sake rather than any intention to help me.

Every single person in the mercenary troop was eating evolution crystals. If I had continued to remain oblivious to this fact, then the only person in this family to have eaten the crystals would have been me.

That's way too dangerous!

I couldn't care less if the troop was reluctant to share the evolution crystals with Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie. Anyhow, once they completely offset my part, they had to share some at least with Dàgē. But before that happened, I'd be the one taking care of Dàgē. I'd definitely make sure that he wasn't eating any fewer crystals than the other mercenaries, and I'd even make sure that Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie had their share as well.

I'll be the one to take care of my family!

Chapter #7: The Coffee's Not To Blame

Kneeling by the terrace on the second floor, I reached out to touch my waist and was immediately greeted with a sharp flare of pain. I was missing a chunk of flesh from my waist, and I had lost a fair bit of blood. Such a heavy stench of blood would attract aberrants, so I had no choice but to freeze the wound and blood.

I was such an idiot. My prized knowledge of the previous world had let me down—I never imagined that tier one aberrants would start appearing so early on. I'd thought that they only started appearing half a year in, so I had never imagined that one would make its appearance just one and a half months into the apocalypse. I had really been ignorant in the past.

Previously, around this time, Guan Weijun had spent every day fleeing for survival, with no clue about evolution crystals, so there was no way I would have gone hunting by choice. Therefore, I didn't know that tier one aberrants had appeared so quickly. Thinking back on it, it wasn't so strange at all. It seemed that I couldn't completely trust my past experiences.

Even though this was a tier one aberrant, as I was now, it was still manageable. Right now, the strength of my current body and the power of my abilities should have reached tier one, going by the standards in the previous world. It was simply because I had underestimated my opponent that I'd sustained a serious injury. My wariness really hadn't recovered to the same levels as when I was Guan Weijun.

That tier one aberrant was still looking for me down below. I'd injured his knee, so he was limping. He looked pissed off, like he wanted to rip me into shreds, deep fry them, and eat them with vengeance.

I assessed our injuries. *Should I continue combat, or just leave?*

After freezing the injury at my waist, it no longer hurt as much, but it would still definitely impact my fighting capabilities. So maybe I should just run away after all... *No!*

I started, shocked by that "No!" That sudden thought that had popped out of nowhere wasn't like me at all.

I still remembered that Guan Weijun was always thinking about escape, thinking that if I could just find somewhere safe, I'd hide there for the rest of my life. But he, on the other hand, was very hot blooded. He always wanted to kill off all those aberrants and always wanted to become stronger, so that he wouldn't ever need to run away again. So many times, I remembered ending up having to tow the defeated him along and escaping in a sorry manner.

But he actually started getting stronger and stronger, and soon, I was left far behind. Forget fighting shoulder to shoulder, even running away with him when he lost a fight became impossible.

One wanted to flee, and one wanted to fight. Neither person was right or wrong. If there hadn't been a me who wanted to flee, the him who wanted to fight would never have survived for long, even if he had twenty lives. Then again, he ended up becoming an ability user far stronger than me.

Do we have to fight to become stronger?

I looked down between the terrace railings at the aberrant. He was getting closer and closer, so I had to decide whether I wanted to fight or flee. Otherwise, I would miss out on the best opportunity—regardless of which option I was considering.

It's very rare for a tier one aberrant to appear just a month and a half into the apocalypse, so if we eat his evolution crystal, our abilities would grow a lot, right?

If it was him, he would definitely choose to fight.

But back then, he had the foolish Guan Weijun waiting to save him, whereas I had no one at my back waiting to save me. If I lost, I'd die. I smiled faintly.

So, we have to fight to become stronger? If I fight a battle with no escape, would I then be able to surpass him, or even reach the level of the Ice Emperor?

I lifted the ice staff and slowly stood up. The aberrant had already reached the spot right below the house. This specimen definitely exceeded two meters in height, which was fairly enormous when going by the size of an average aberrant at the moment. He was also covered in a hard exterior shell, probably an evolution that resulted from someone shooting him.

Just now, I had misjudged the shell's hardness. My ice staff couldn't

get through the shell, while his claw had ripped at my side. Fortunately, when I landed on the ground, I retaliated with a strike to his knee, so we were even.

Gazing down at the top of the aberrant's head, I clenched my teeth and leapt down from the second floor terrace. My staff swung down toward his head, but he blocked it with an arm. This blow still didn't manage to break through the shell, but judging from his complexion, he wasn't completely fine either.

I was very strong now, and a staff was a blunt weapon to boot, so even if he had an external shell, he must have felt the blow after getting hit so hard.

He grabbed at the ice staff with one hand, his strength obviously much greater than mine. I couldn't pull it back in time, and using this opportunity, he used his other hand to grab my foot. I was forced to let go of the staff, giving him the chance to fling the ice staff far, far away.

A look of glee crossed that face covered by a thick layer of brown shell. But right then, I twisted in mid-air and used my knee to smash apart his delight. In the same move, I also yanked out the knife tied to my leg and stabbed it down right into his abnormally large eye socket.

He howled in agony. His wildly flailing arms caught the injury at my waist again, which hurt so badly that my entire body started trembling. But I didn't stop because of this, and immediately seized the opportunity to grab his fists and freeze them solid!

After sealing his movements, I stomped down at the knife stabbed in his eye, stamping and stomping and twisting...

He fell to the ground with a resounding crash, but still continued thrashing every so often. I immediately thawed my hands, leapt at the knife, and jostled hard at the handle, going up up down down left right left right. Really, the only things that were missing were the A and B buttons to complete the gaming experience. That did the trick and completely turned his brains into a pile of mush. Only then did the body's movements reduce to mere twitching.

Whew...

I defeated a tier one aberrant!

I felt damned good and couldn't care less about my exhaustion or injuries. Everything was looking rosy. Just one and a half months into the apocalypse, and I was already able to defeat a tier one aberrant. Back in the Guan Weijun days, even three years in, I was still running away at the sight of a tier one aberrant.

Next was dissection time. That shell really was ridiculously tough. I smashed and chopped and sawed and kicked, and it was only when I was so worn out that the pain at my waist was starting to get to me that I was able to excavate the evolution crystal. But when I saw that the crystal was as large as the joint in my pinky, I felt that everything was worth it.

This harvest far exceeded my expectations, and together with the ever-growing pain of my waist injury, I decided to call it a day and go

straight home.

I fired up the car, worrying about the waves of pain coming from my waist all the while. When I arrived home, the first thing I did was take off my clothes to check out the injury.

The injury was much worse than I'd thought. Starting from my side, three claw marks had gouged their way across two-thirds of my abdomen. The wounds were deep. If I hadn't used ice to freeze them, it was likely that my guts would have started spilling out halfway through that intense battle. That was close.

Wiping away the cold sweat, I started bandaging the wound, and then gave myself a consolatory jab of antibiotics, although they had largely lost their effectiveness on a tier one body. After all, if the body itself was unable to fight off the infection, no amount of antibiotics would do any good.

Standing in front of the mirror, I treated the other visible, bleeding wounds and left the bruises and small scratches as they were.

I stared at the mirror, and a beautiful, young man looked back at me from within. His complexion was a little pale, probably a result of the wounds, and his slender body with a slight hint of musculature was covered in scars, but none of this lessened his overall handsomeness.

The current "Jiang Shuyu" had completely recovered. Shujun said I was more or less back to the state from before getting hit on the head by a tile, and that I even seemed more toned than before.

Every day, when I habitually checked out the mirror to inspect my body's condition, the handsome man in the mirror made me feel like I was going blind from his beauty. If I revealed a smile, his smiling face gave a sense of mysterious allure... *What the hell! I'm just smiling randomly, so where is the mystery and allure coming from?!*

I didn't dare to look too much at my body during my daily showers. I was really worried that, someday, I'd admire myself in the mirror to the point of nosebleeding, like some kind of insane level of narcissism.

Even in my current miserable state of injuries, I'd still make people go "aww" at how heartbreakingly pitiful I looked. *Really, enough is enough!*

Yawning widely, I quickly changed my clothes and headed out to find Shujun. I had to quickly finish my tasks for the day and get some rest.

I displayed the fruits of today's labor in front of Mèimei. Before getting a hold of the tier one evolution crystal, I had also gotten three pieces of normal evolution crystals, making a total of four pieces. The crystals were all fairly substantial in size, especially that tier one crystal... *Ahem, all right, I confess to showing off a little.*

"Why's this one so big?" Shujun asked with a little surprise, "Even the mercenary troop has never brought home such a big one before!"

"This is a tier one aberrant's evolution crystal. It beats the normal ones. Eat the small one first..." Here, a sharp stab of pain at my waist forced me to pause a moment, "Then make three cups of tea."

Shujun didn't respond and just looked at me. I couldn't tell what she was thinking. Just as I was guessing at the possibilities, she said, "All right, I'll go make tea. The small ones are for Uncle and Auntie, and the big one is for Dàgē, right?"

"Yeah... wait!"

After some hesitation, I decided to take the opportunity to chat a little with Dàgē. I hadn't seen Dàgē for quite a while, and I was feeling fantastic after beating a tier one aberrant.

"Just make tea for Uncle and Auntie. I'll go make a coffee for Dàgē."

When Shujun heard that, her eyes started sparkling, and she quickly said, "Yup yup, that's right. Èrgē, you go make some coffee. I'm sure Dàgē will be very happy."

Humming a little ditty, I made a cup of coffee for Dàgē. Lately, I'd been busy hunting and Dàgē had his hands full as well. It seemed they were a bit short on ammunition, so they were preparing to drive out farther afield in search of guns. The residential areas around these parts at most had one or two guns or rifles, which simply wasn't enough for them.

Dàgē was in the middle of cleaning his guns, and he looked a little surprised when he saw me come in.

I gave a small smile, saying, "Dàgē, I made you some coffee."

Dàgē looked at the coffee mug in my hand and nodded, continuing to

clean his guns all the while. I placed the coffee on the table, and just as I was about to speak to Dàgē, he gave a helpless sigh.

"Shuyu, you've been going out every day. Just where have you been?"

"Looking for supplies," I could only repeat the same old excuse again.

"Really?" Dàgē looked down and continued to polish his guns.

I could only use this excuse, and anyway, I was in fact bringing back supplies. Because the farther I went, the deeper into the suburbs I got. The supplies were in more plentiful supply there than these parts, so I always came back each time with a few backpacks of supplies. It was just that I didn't want them to become reliant on guns, so I never brought back any guns.

Seeing Dàgē continuing to clean his guns, I glanced at the coffee on the table and couldn't help but remind him, "Dàgē, why don't you drink the coffee?"

"Just leave it there. I'll get around to it later."

Hearing that, I became even more flustered. This was a tier one crystal, which was very difficult to come by, so I absolutely had to watch him drink it all before I relax. I could only urge him again, "Can't you drink it now? I made it especially for you!"

Dàgē looked up and explained, "I just drank some water, so I'm not thirsty. I'll drink it later."

I gaped like a goldfish, unsure of how I could make him drink it right now.

Dàgē looked at me and set aside his work. He asked seriously, "Shuyu, is there anything about the apocalypse that you haven't told us yet? If there is, it's better if you told everyone."

Anything I haven't said? Does he really expect me to explain every single little detail of my ten years in the apocalypse?

And more importantly, even if I explained a lot of the stuff, it wasn't something they would understand. Things like tier one aberrants were, at the end of the day, just stronger aberrants. It was just that humans split them by tiers for easier categorization. If you hadn't encountered them before and really fought with them, there was simply no way of understanding what level of strength that represented. Describing it was a complete waste of time and would just make people worry needlessly.

Besides, I was also worried that I would get things wrong. For example, a tier one aberrant had appeared just today, only one and a half months into the apocalypse, whereas based on my understanding, this should happen half a year later. *What if I told them something wrong?*

In my previous life, Guan Weijun was an ordinary person who fled wherever was safest in the first year of the apocalypse, so many things that she knew may not be wholly accurate.

"Just my past life experiences in the apocalypse, but these aren't things that can be explained easily."

Dàgē nodded and didn't question any further. It seemed he wasn't planning on saying anything more to me. He didn't touch the cup of coffee either.

Feeling uneasy, I suppressed the idea of just taking away the cup of coffee. I reminded myself that Dàgē's power was healing and that he was repaying the others for the crystals that I had eaten...

Taking in a deep breath, I told myself that, no, Dàgē was always very honest with me.

"Dàgē, remember to drink the coffee."

"Mm."

Returning to my room, I spent a little while sitting on the bed, spacing out. The injuries today were really very severe, and I should be getting some rest as soon as possible to help speed up my recovery. This way, I'd be able to continue to go out hunting. Besides, my eyes kept drooping and I could barely keep them open. But I still couldn't dispel my worries.

After some hesitation, I ended up climbing off my bed after all and, resisting the pain at my waist, walked to the back garden. My strengthened body's five senses were much more sensitive than before, and very soon, I could detect a whiff of coffee in the air.

I walked and searched. By the wall of the house, I lifted my head to find Dàgē's room window. Then, I looked down at the ground.

Where the smell of coffee was coming from.

I was wrong. I should have just let Shujun bring the tea, just like before, instead of letting a tier one crystal go to complete waste. Maybe I'd also raised his suspicions, so Dàgē would no longer drink even Shujun's tea. *If so, what should I do?*

I dropped to my knees and dug up the soil that was soaked in coffee, taking it in one gulp after the other.

I can't let it go to waste.



I ended up with a stomachache that evening and spent the entire night running to the toilet. I barely got a wink of sleep, and after the restless night, the injuries at my side took a turn for the worse. When I opened my eyes the next day, I couldn't even get up.

Lying on the bed, I could feel that my face was flushed but my body was icy. If anything, my entire body felt as weak as a kitten. So, I was positive I had come down with a fever, and a pretty bad one at that.

In the past three weeks, I had been sneaking out every day in the afternoon, and sometimes I would even go out in the dead of night. As expected, having to harvest five people's share of evolution crystals was tough work, especially Dàgē's share, since he needed to eat two people's portions. Because his healing ability couldn't increase his combat powers, he needed to rely on the crystals even more to strengthen his body.

Every day, I wrung out every last drop of power, so despite Jiang Shuyu's superb health and the wealth of crystals I had eaten, it really ended up being too much of a burden on the body...

A knock came from outside, and Shujun asked, "Gē , it's time to eat. Why aren't you down yet?"

I thought quickly. It was impossible to hide my sickness from Shujun, so the only thing I could say was, "Junjun, can you bring it up? Just say I don't feel like going downstairs to eat."

If Dàgē discovered I was ill and did a quick check, then I wouldn't be able to hide my injuries anymore. And if Dàgē discovered that I had been sneaking out to fight aberrants, I really didn't know how he would react.

After a moment's silence from outside the door, there came an "Okay."

Soon after, Shujun brought over the meal. I struggled hard to get up and dragged my heavy feet to the door to let her in.

Shujun brought in the food and quietly sat to one side, watching me eat. She didn't speak until I was done eating and had set down the chopsticks and bowl.

"Gē , you're sick. Can't I tell Dàgē about this? He's got healing power, so he can heal you."

I shook my head, refusing outright. "Don't."

Shujun stopped that line of inquiry but suggested without giving up, "Then, I'll make you chicken soup today. You have to promise to finish it all."

I faltered for a moment. For a tier one body, chicken soup had long lost its effectiveness. But if it put Shujun's heart at ease, I would nod, say "Yes" and then down the soup when it came.

Having eaten my fill, I lay down and slept for a bit more. When I awoke, I originally planned to continue forging my knife, but the moment I used my ice powers, I was instantly struck by a splitting headache. So I gave up on that and just spent the entire day eating and sleeping and eating, hoping that I would be able to recover just a little bit faster.

To my surprise, on the third day, I was still extremely groggy and the dizziness actually worsened. When I opened my eyes to look at the time, even the clock was spinning in my vision, and it was with great difficulty that I could make out what time it was. Oh boy, it was already one thirty in the afternoon. If not for the chattering outside my door, I'd likely have continued sleeping.

"Is he still throwing a tantrum about not coming down to eat?"

This is... Dàgē's voice?

"No, Dàgē. Èrgē's just being a sleepyhead. He went to bed quite late last night."

"What's there to do so late at night? Don't tell me there's still television to watch in the evening? There are aberrants outside, so we can't even switch on the lights. Aside from sleeping, what else is there to do at night? Shujun, stop helping him make excuses!"

"Dàgē, no, it's not that, Èrgē, he..."

"Jiang Shuyu! Open the door right this instant!"

Open the door...

But I can't get up anymore...

In my daze, I watched the room door being kicked right off its hinges. Jiang Shutian stormed in with fury. At the sight, I started panicking, to the point where my entire chest felt tight.

Yes, with my knowledge of the apocalypse, I believed I would be able to survive even if I left this place. But I simply didn't want to go. I didn't want to leave this family behind.

But the mercenaries hated me, and now even Dàgē was starting to dislike me. He even threw away the coffee I purposefully brought over without drinking it. *Just how much does he suspect that I am not his younger brother?*

If I don't leave, am I really intending to wait until Jiang Shutian's suspicions exceed the breaking point, and he would just come strangle me to death?

But Junjun, Dàgē, Uncle, and Auntie...

After being reincarnated, even though it is still the apocalyptic world, I have family and friends. I really don't want to leave, so what should I do?

"Shuyu?"

Dàgē rushed over to my bed and looked down at me, and in that moment, his expression of anger froze. As for myself, I was terrified. *Is he going to strangle me?*

"Dàgē, you idiot!"

Shujun ran in and started pummeling Dàgē—*Girl, this is our mighty Dàgē, you know? You actually dare to hit him however you like?*

"Dàgē, you stupid idiot! You jerk! I saw it all; you poured away the coffee Èrgē brewed for you. That had an evolution crystal Èrgē fought hard to get. It was the size of a thumb!"

Junjun, you're exaggerating too much. It was at most the size of the joint of a pinkie.

"Dàgē, did you know, Èrgē ate up all the soil where you poured away the coffee?!"

She saw? My wariness really shouldn't have been that bad. After a moment's thought, I abruptly recalled Auntie's search powers and realized what had happened. So it seemed Uncle and Auntie also knew

about this already. *Shujun, really...*

Shujun shoved Dàgē away forcefully and came to my bedside, looking at me heartbrokenly. Tears trickled down her face, dripping down one by one.

I'd lost count of the number of times I had made her cry. In the span of just over one month, those almond-shaped eyes had become puffy too many times.

"I noticed a few days ago that Èrgē was walking strangely. It was even more noticeable than his previous injuries. He hasn't even been able to get up at all these few days. I knew it. His injuries this time are very serious. He had finally just gotten better, and now he's become so weak again."

Dàgē looked at her, asking in astonishment, "He's hurt? Not sick? But how did Shuyu get hurt—wait, you said he was fighting? To get evolution crystals? Who went with him?"

Shujun told him the entire truth, her words barbed with accusation and blame.

"The tea I made for Dàgē always had evolution crystals in it. Even me, Uncle, and Auntie had our share. And Èrgē was the one who got them all! He was out fighting aberrants every day, both day and night. He wouldn't even tell me if he got hurt, but all I had to do was look at the way he was walking to know he had injured himself again!"

So it turned out Shujun knew after all. I had even prided myself on my

acting skills, but as it turned out, her acting skills were way better than mine.

Dàgē wore a hurt expression, and his tone carried an even deeper pain as he slowly said, "Shuyu, why did you hide this from me? Do you not believe in me? Is Dàgē not worth believing in anymore?"

No! I just don't want to join those mercenaries who hate me, and I would even have to share my evolution crystals with them. I simply don't want to split the crystals evenly with them! They even refuse to give any to Shujun, Uncle, and Auntie, so how could I possibly share the crystals with them!

I would rather go crystal hunting myself and bear the risk myself. I was fine as long as I could keep the crystals to share with my own family. But if Dàgē found out, he would never be willing to let me go hunting by myself, which was why I had kept it to myself.

I couldn't tell him anything and had no choice but to keep fighting aberrants over and over again. But no matter what I did, I couldn't get enough crystals. *So for the crystals I got today, who should get priority over them?*

Tier one aberrants had appeared. And if I were to encounter one of the stronger tier one aberrants, would I be able to win? If I couldn't win, would I be able to escape?

If I ran into Dàgē at home today, what kind of expression would he use when looking at me? How much did he suspect me?

Junjun, don't be sad, I'm not hurt, I'm fine, really...

The unfairness of it all, the pain, the fear and, most of all, the unwillingness to give up—all sorts of emotions suddenly welled up inside of me. I knew I must be burning up really badly, otherwise why would I be assaulted by so many and such complex emotions? Even in the mess of my life in the previous world, I had never encountered such complicated feelings before.

Dàgē frowned deeply. It was an indescribable expression, but the moment I saw it, my heart ached. He said very quietly, "Xiao Yu, don't cry. It's all Dàgē's fault."

"You didn't drink my coffee." I mumbled the fact that caused me the greatest pain and fear above all, "You poured it away. Dàgē, were you afraid I would poison it? Did you think I would want to harm you?"

"Sorry." Dàgē kept wiping away the tears that spilled nonstop from my eyes, and repeated, "Sorry. In the future, no matter what you give to me, Dàgē will drink it all."

I cried. I didn't know why, but I kept crying and the tears wouldn't stop falling. *Just when can I become a man who sheds blood instead of tears?* I was always crying like a woman, wasting Jiang Shuyu's good looks.

Dàgē suddenly lowered his head and touched his forehead against mine. Then, he said in a voice heavy with worry, "Xiao Yu, you've got a really bad fever. Where did you hurt yourself?"

I was crying so hard I almost couldn't speak, but I managed to squeeze out one word. "Waist."

He pulled away the covers and ripped open my shirt, then carefully undid the bandages.

To one side, Shujun sucked in a sharp breath, then immediately covered her mouth, not daring to make a sound. *Is my injury really that bad? Never mind, Shujun's reaction isn't a good measure.* Even if I had a bruise the size of a thumb, she would still look on it with anxiety and worry, and would even insist on helping me gently massage away the bad blood.

Dàgē's face was very ashen as he spoke. "The wound is infected."

No wonder I had a fever. I already had a tier one strengthened body. For a wound that was treated to still get infected meant that the tier one aberrant wasn't for show either. Even after it died, it was still trying hard to drag me down to hell with it.

A sudden warm, soothing sensation came from my waist. That was Dàgē's healing powers. It had been a very long time since I had last experienced this feeling—I'd almost forgotten how good it felt to be healed.

"Shujun, go boil a basinful of hot water to wipe down Èrgē."

"Okay!"

After being healed, my body finally felt better. Although I was still

feverish, at least the pain at my waist had lessened significantly. Next, Dàgē and Mèimei used hot water to wipe me down, and it felt so comforting that I became extremely drowsy.

From one ear came Dàgē's voice, a low but reassuring voice.

"Xiao Yu, sleep well. When you wake up, Junjun will cook a good meal for you."

I made a "mmm" sound and slipped into deep slumber.



The next time I opened my eyes, I was trussed up like a turkey.

What the hell?

"Yo, Mr. Handsome's awake!"

A sudden voice rang out, and it was only then that I noticed there were other people in the room. I turned my head to look, only to discover that it was a woman I didn't recognize. She was gazing at me up and down in a leisurely manner, with a look in her eyes that pissed me off.

"He looks even better than those TV stars. God, seriously, he looked good asleep, but now that he's awake, he looks even better."

This voice... Someone else is in the room, too? I twisted my head around and saw three men and two women in total, all strangers. The other woman was sprawled on one side of the bed. She looked

younger, at most twenty-odd years old, and she reached out to stroke my face. Seeing that, the other woman also leaned forward to touch and feel me.

I was speechless. As a woman in the previous world, I was worried that I would be raped. Now that I was a man in this world, it seemed I still had to worry about being raped. So that was why I always said, it wasn't good to be born with good looks in the apocalypse!

Ignoring the ongoing sexual harassment, I struggled to figure out the situation while being completely immobilized. First, I discovered Uncle and Auntie on the floor to one side. Both were bound hand and foot and were looking at me worriedly, but thankfully, neither of them seemed hurt.

Uncle and Auntie are both here, so why isn't Shujun around... Shit! Shujun is a pretty girl! I panicked.

Wait, hold your horses. Uncle and Auntie only look a little alarmed and are still relatively calm. Judging from their reactions, Shujun should be fine—she has to be fine!

At this point, someone else walked into the room. He was very tall and lanky, and he even had a rifle hanging from a shoulder. Facing the tall, broad-built man in the room, he reported, "Sir, something's wrong. The basement is stockpiled with foods and civilian supplies. There's boxes of the stuff. It's crazy how much stuff there is. It doesn't seem like these were foraged supplies either. It's almost like these people predicted the apocalypse and rounded up some supplies beforehand."

Crap, they discovered our supplies. Now, they're not going to go anywhere any time soon.

There were too many of them, and they were armed with guns as well, guns that packed serious firepower. Mr. Broad even had a machine gun slung across his back, and even the women were equipped with handguns.

If it were just handguns, I could still try dodging or blocking the bullets with ice. But there was no way I could go up against a machine gun. The only thing I was sure I could pull off was fleeing. But with Uncle and Auntie here, there was no way I could run off just by myself.

I checked my body's condition. First, I created a piece of ice in my mouth to confirm that I was able to use my powers, and it also slaked my thirst at the same time. Then, I shifted my waist a bit. It stung a little, so it seemed the wound hadn't completely healed yet. But my head was clear, so the fever was gone.

If these people were just slightly more spread out from each other, with a bit of a head start, I might be able to take them down one by one.

"You're the only ones having fun!" A short man with a pointy head and rat-like eyes said spitefully as he glared at the two women, "Such a pity that doll ran off. She sure looked damn fine."

Shujun got away? Good!

A fat man whacked the back of Shorty's head, yelling, "Don't reveal

things so easily!"

Shorty gingerly rubbed the back of his head, replying "S'not like it matters. Two out of the three are old fogies, and the young one looks like he's currently sick. Who gives a shit about them?"

Hearing that, I frowned. *There should be someone from the mercenary troop on guard in the attic. Is that person dead, or did they run away?*

No matter what, the only thing I could do right now was to quietly wait for the right opportunity. Once they were scattered enough, I should be able to deal with these people without putting Uncle and Auntie in danger. Although they had guns, aside from Mr. Broad and Lanky who seemed just a little dangerous, the others didn't seem like they were people who were familiar with guns.

Although I wanted to quietly wait, those two women sure as hell couldn't and just kept stroking here and there all over my body. They even started feeling me up and rolling up my shirt.

I was astounded. *Seriously? Are you so horny that you're prepared to rape me in front of everyone? It's not even two months into the apocalypse, so how did things degenerate to be this shameless so quickly?*

"Don't you dare touch Shuyu!" Uncle was so angry, his entire face was flushed, and he couldn't help shouting, "Don't you have any shame, doing things like that to a kid?"

The younger woman stopped, her face a little red. So it seemed she

still had a shred of morality left in her. But the older one just burst into laughter as she said, "So what? It's the apocalypse. What's there to be ashamed about? Do you think that shame will keep you fed?"

With that, she forcefully and provokingly ripped open the clothes in front of my chest.

Fucking hell! If I waited quietly for an opportunity, I'd get raped! And I'd even sworn beforehand that I would never get topped by anyone as long as I lived! Fury erupted from my heart, and I had the sudden impulse to chop off the woman's wandering hands and shove them down her throat!

"Stop right this instant!" Uncle ground his teeth.

"Xiao Yu's just eighteen! You can't do that!" Auntie shouted desperately.

Hearing Uncle's and Auntie's voices, the fury in my heart extinguished. *Whatever, I'm a man after all. Even if a woman does this and that to me, it wouldn't really count as topping me.*

If I threw all caution to the wind and started fighting, it would be too risky. There were still too many people. There were six of them just in this room, and it was likely that there were still more people outside. On the other hand, Uncle and Auntie were still tied up and unable to move. Bullets would fly around indiscriminately.

Hearing Auntie's words, the older woman became even more delighted, shrieking, "Yo! What a catch! He's still young and fresh, only eighteen!"

Then, she lowered herself onto me and started nibbling at my chest. The younger woman was only able to hold herself back for a minute before she swooped in to kiss my face. Thankfully, I was able to twist my face aside quickly, so she wasn't able to kiss me on the lips. Otherwise, this body's first kiss would have been over, just like that.

Don't tell me they're planning to enact some kind of AV scene in front of everyone?! I really wanted to cry. Although I'd seen a lot in my previous life, I'd originally thought that I just had to increase my combat abilities in this lifetime to avoid these kinds of shitty situations. But I never imagined that, just a mere month and a half into the apocalypse, I would become the protagonist of such a sorry situation, and that it'd be even more tragic than Guan Weijun's as a bystander.

That's why, people living in the apocalypse really can't afford to look too good. That applies to both men and women!

No, I really have to at least fight to preserve my chastity somehow.

"D-don't..." Tears sprung up in my eyes. I summoned the most pitiful expression I could, imploring weakly, "At least, please, don't do it here."

I struggled to squeeze out tears. An idle smile was enough to captivate people, so now that I'm intentionally looking pitiful, let's see if that isn't enough to bewitch the two of you! Quickly take me to the next room to force yourselves on me, and I'll annihilate you immediately!

Honestly though, I was weeping on the inside as I played out the

honey trap. I was already at tier one, yet I still ended up being bullied by two ordinary women. *How the mighty have fallen!*

The two women gazed at my face in a daze. Mere moments ago, they had been bold enough to want to rape a man in front of everyone, but now, they were reduced to shy maidens. Jiang Shuyu's charm really was invincible. Just this face alone was a kind of power!

"That's a nice expression he's got," Shorty actually leapt forward and started groping my chest with outstretched claws, saying gleefully, "Even a man like me, who's never been into other guys, wants to eat him up. Now that the doll's gone, this one will do just fine."

Fuck off and rot in hell, this woman... no, this man will never let you top him!

As if feeling their territory getting threatened, the two women snarled and bared their teeth. "Hands off! You fucking pervert, don't you dare touch him again!"

Shorty was clearly undaunted by them, shouting back, "Then what, you're allowed to rape someone but we're not?! Everyone worked to capture him, so everyone can damn well share! So what, are you sayin' other people can't touch him?" He looked at the fatty and the tall, skinny man, yelling, "I mean, look at this guy, doesn't he make you wanna top him?"

Top top top... get topped by an aberrant, you shithead!

I never dreamed that I would attract even more people, and men to

boot. I was a little frustrated. It looked like I really couldn't use my allure in the future. It works for other women and men, but the moment Jiang Shuyu uses it, not only would he blast away all opposition, he'd bring himself to ruin as well.

Auntie suddenly spoke up. "Come feel me up instead! I'm just a bit old, that's all. But look, I still look good, and my boobs are big. No matter what, a woman's better than a man, don't you think?"

Auntie...

I want to kill all these people.

"Shut up!" Mr. Broad snapped irritably, "No one is allowed to touch him. There's something up with this house. Keep your hands on your guns!"

Another man walked in from outside and reported to Mr. Broad, "Chief Hao, there's a sentry point set up in the attic. It looks very professional and is definitely not an ordinary set up. But there's no one there. It's likely that the person ran off the moment they saw how many of us there were."

Dammit. I knew it wasn't just six people. So how many of them are there? And the person who just walked in doesn't look like an ordinary civilian either. He definitely has combat abilities.

I shouldn't make a move carelessly, but if they really do lay even a finger on Auntie—then I'm going down fighting to the bitter end!

Under Mr. Broad's orders, Uncle was taken away, and Auntie was left where she was.

"How many of you are there?" Mr. Broad questioned Auntie, but held a knife against my neck.

Auntie's expression changed.

Mr. Broad said flatly, "I won't kill him in one go. No, I'll avoid the vital parts and carve out dozens of pieces of flesh and still leave him alive. Believe me, I can. So, I'll ask you first, and then I'll ask that man of yours as well. If the stories don't match up between the two of you, then everyone here will have a taste of your boy, and then I'll carve out his flesh, slice by slice."

Hearing this threat, Auntie's face turned white and she fessed up to everything. When Uncle was switched in next, Mr. Broad repeated the same routine and obtained the exact same answer.

This was really bad. They had found out every detail about the composition of our home team, whereas we had no idea whether our people had found out that our house had been taken over. I really hoped that Shujun, after escaping their clutches, or the person who had been on guard duty could quickly find Dàgē and the others. Lanky said, "Chief Hao, it doesn't sound like many people, but the mercenaries are gonna be tricky."

Chief Hao—I wasn't sure if that was his name or if it stood for chief leader Hao—stroked his chin as he said booming, "Kid, what's your full name?"

I frowned inwardly at this question, but Auntie hadn't been brought back yet. We were screwed if the names didn't match up, so I had no choice but to reply honestly, "Jiang Shuyu."

"Chief Hao, you're thinking of taking him in?" The fatty seemed to find this very unusual and asked curiously, "I never knew Chief Hao was into guys as well."

"The hell are you saying? A man like me has zero interest in guys!" Chief Hao whacked the back of the guy's head, and then responded with a question in kind, "JDT. Have you heard of it?"

Lanky clearly seemed to think that his intellect had been insulted, but because the person who had insulted him was his team leader, he had no choice but to suppress his anger and reply, "Of course I have, it's the Jiang Dominion Troop. That mercenary troop's not big, but it's said that the members are pretty good. They're quite well known in the industry as well. So you know them, boss? I've never heard you mention it before."

"I've met them before, but I can't say I know them. At the time, I wanted to recruit some of their members, so I asked around."

Lanky blurted out, "But I heard it's really hard to recruit guys from the JDT. They rarely change members, and it's hard to lure any of them away. And it's even harder to get in."

"That's right. After hearing things, I wasn't gonna waste my time or breath to recruit them." Chief Hao stroked his chin again, musing, "But at the time, I heard that the JDT's leader lived near Zhongguan City,

and that his real name was Jiang Shutian. So, who d'ya think this Jiang Shuyu is?"

He actually knows Dàgē? I frowned, thinking hard, but judging from his tone, he didn't seem like he had a grudge against Dàgē, nor did he know him well. *They're just both in the same business.*

I never imagined that they would be mercenaries as well. Now shit really had hit the fan. An average person and a professional mercenary were simply on different levels in terms of combative power.

"If this really is the JDT's territory, then things are gonna get real tricky." Chief Hao pondered for a moment before continuing, "It's not worth going up against them in a direct confrontation."

"But Chief Hao, there're a lot of supplies here," Fatty immediately protested.

"I didn't say I didn't want the supplies." Chief Hao waved to dispel everyone's doubts and explained, "I was originally planning to just take over this house directly. This location and the house's construction are both pretty good, and the basement is full of supplies. We didn't encounter any monsters on the way in either, so it's likely that the JDT cleared out the nests. But we gotta make sure we wipe out the entire JDT, otherwise they'll get revenge on us for sure. Just firing off a few shots at us every so often is enough to be a pain in the ass to deal with."

"Then, let's just fight already!" Shorty shouted, "We've got more people, so what's there to be scared of?!"

"Do you even know how many bullets are spent in a gun fight, you little fucker? And we've got grenades, and god knows how much firepower the JDT are packing. That's gonna blow up way big, y'know?!"

Chief Hao snapped irritably, "And even if we exterminated them, we'd probably have run out of bullets ourselves. The sounds of gunfire would also attract a whole lot of monsters, and we won't be able to stay in this house much longer. And we probably won't have any choice but to abandon the supplies. And with no guns, whatcha gonna do, have a go at the monsters with a knife?"

Shorty shrunk back, not daring to speak.

How unexpected. This man looked like a brute, but he had a pretty good head on his shoulders. The others also felt that he was making sense, so no one made any more objections.

"Go find a car nearby and carry away all the supplies."

Lanky said, "There are a lot of supplies here, so it'll take some time."

"If time's the issue, then we can just make use of this kid here." Chief Hao used the nozzle of the gun to lift my chin, and he remarked with a grin, "Jiang Shutian is famous for caring about his troop's lives. So what do you think will happen if it came down to his own little brother? Such a pity we couldn't capture that sister of his, though. With such a pretty, little sister, I'm sure that, as the big brother, he must *love* her to bits!" He placed particular emphasis on the word "love."

The others started chuckling with the lewdest expressions you could think of.

Chief Hao thought for a bit, then beckoned to the two women. "The two of you, bite him a few more times and make him look more pathetic. That way, it'll hurt Jiang Shutian's little heart even more."

The two women's faces lit up, while mine darkened.

Chapter #8: The Sick Cat Retaliates

I went from being trussed up on the bed to being dangled in mid-air above the balcony.

My situation was worsening by the second. *Am I really getting a second life in another reality? Has there ever been a reincarnated protagonist who got hit on the head with a tile, got injured by an aberrant, withered into a stick, ate soil, nearly got raped, and was finally hung up on a balcony?*

If anyone dared to accuse me of living a good life in the apocalypse in this life, what with plentiful food and shelter and all, I would tell them oh so pleasantly, "Stand here, and I'll go up to the top floor of Taipei 101 and throw a tile at your head!"

One of the mercenaries in Dàgē's troop had been discovered lurking nearby, which resulted in me being strung up on the balcony. Personally, I was pretty sure it was Cain intentionally giving himself away. Even if it wasn't him, I was going to blame him anyway!

The only fortunate thing was that they hadn't found my ice knife and ice staff. Probably because I was still young and looked absolutely dreadful and pathetic with my illness; not to mention the basement was positively bursting with supplies, that they couldn't be bothered to do a search of my room. And good thing they hadn't, otherwise things wouldn't have been as simple as me getting hung up on this balcony. Actually, I wasn't the slightest bit concerned about the rope binding my hands. They had been pretty prudent and had used thick hemp rope to tie me up. This was more than enough to immobilize even the

most muscular of mercenaries, much less an ordinary eighteen-year-old kid. It was such a pity that I was their opponent. I could only say, tough luck!

No, actually, I'm the one with the bad luck. I mean, the person being hung up so pitifully here is me.

If not for the fact that they have a machine gun and that Uncle and Auntie are nearby, I would kill them all... No wait, they said they also have grenades as well. Whew, good thing I didn't do anything rash.

I had no choice but to continue hanging there, waiting for the right time. Actually, the best case scenario would be if Dàgē and the others were to draw away the people over here with a gunfight, because then I could rescue Uncle and Auntie!

Unfortunately, I was also worried about the same thing that Chief Hao was talking about. If both sides started fighting with guns and grenades in earnest, not only would this place be reduced to rubble, even the supplies could be put in danger. Additionally, Dàgē and the others were short on ammunition to start with, and they didn't seem to have properly trained their abilities. So, even if they won the fight, it would be tough surviving afterwards without guns.

After turning over the possibilities a million times, I still felt that the safest method to get out of the current situation would be to pick them off one by one, so long as I could get them isolated.

Speaking of which, it was such a pity just now that the two women were stopped by Chief Hao, so they weren't able to haul me off to the

next room to rape me.

Chief Hao walked out onto the balcony, but possibly because he was worried that he would get sniped, he stood behind me and shouted out into the open, "Jiang Shutian, I'm warning you, you best stay away from this house and give up on this base. Otherwise, this pretty little brother of yours will get ripped to pieces!"

He pressed a knife against the small of my back, whispering, "Shout and cry like you mean it. 'Gē, don't come, they really will kill me. And they've got Uncle and Auntie as well.' You're not allowed to say anything else. One extra word, and your Uncle will be cheated on by your infidel Auntie."

At that, fury erupted within me, but I had no choice but to follow his instructions to the T. But I really couldn't force myself to cry, so I could only put in more emotion while wailing my words. *I hope Dàgē won't get too worked up...*

The moment I finished, Chief Hao suddenly grabbed at my hair and jerked my head back. Although my scalp was tearing with pain, I was slow in letting out a scream, mainly because I had temporarily forgotten that my image was of a gentle, powerless pretty boy who was a useless university student. As such, I must not be able to put up with this mild pain without screaming. Hopefully, the slight hesitation had not given me away.

Fortunately, Chief Hao retreated into the house, so it seemed that I hadn't raised his suspicions.

I created a piece of ice in my mouth and melted it slowly to drink. So far, I hadn't felt any energy waves that would indicate the mercenaries having abilities. Unless their abilities were much stronger than mine, it was impossible to hide their use of abilities from me. Besides, I'd created ice multiple times, but they'd had no reaction whatsoever.

So, I should be able to strike off abilities from the list of variables to consider. Even if they discovered my abilities, they wouldn't pose any risk to me.

Now, all I had to do was wait for Dàgē to act. The longer this dragged out, the more supplies they would carry away. I really hoped Dàgē would not act too late in the game, otherwise it'd be troublesome getting back the supplies.

Not knowing how long that would take, I continued to craft pieces of ice to drink. To be honest, I was really very hungry and seriously missed the meals cooked by Shujun. Only being able to drink water to fill my stomach at the moment was torture for me. *Hmph, all right, I'll be sure to get revenge on Chief Hao for that...*

"Hao Pansi!" came Dàgē's distant roar, filled with so much anger that even I was cowed, "Let go of all the hostages right this moment; otherwise you're not getting out of this alive!"

I almost choked on the piece of ice in my mouth.

H-How pansy? Don't tell me this was Chief Hao's name. How could such a tall, big man be called Hao Pansi? Where did his pansy-ness go?!¹

Chief Hao walked out again, remarking thoughtfully, "Seems that he values you more than I'd thought."

Dàgē, you really flipped out! Now the enemy knows everything! That said, I felt a fuzzy warmth in my chest.

Hao Pansi called back, "Jiang Shutian, as long as you promise to abandon this base, your little brother will be just fine."

"Dàgē, don't promise him!" I panicked. Although I didn't have any memories, my gut told me that Jiang Shutian was the kind of guy to go through with his promises no matter what. If he ended up making such a promise, then we really might have to give up on this base. Having forbidden me to talk, Hao Pansi slammed the butt of his gun against my head. Thankfully, I remembered to let out a cry this time around.

A sudden gunshot rang out, and a bullet hole appeared on the wall behind Hao Pansi, a mere twenty centimeters from him.

"Fuck!" Hao Pansi raised his gun in anger. However, he didn't lose himself completely, as expected from someone who was a leader, and aimed at my leg instead of my head.

As of the moment, my toes could barely touch the ground. This was to make sure I didn't have any firm foothold so I couldn't put up a proper fight. At the same time, I wasn't dangling completely in the air; otherwise I wouldn't be able to last long at all.

Probably because I really looked extremely harmless, they didn't even tie up my feet. Only my hands were bound with the thick hemp rope. *Heh, don't mistake me for a gentle, powerless pretty boy. I'm telling you, only the "pretty boy" part applies to me!*

Grabbing onto the thick rope, I flexed my waist, using my core strength to twist in a wide arc mid-air so that I was facing Hao Pansi. Then, I rested one foot against the machine gun he was holding and kicked it against the wall so hard that the wall cracked.

The other foot kicked at his lower jaw. At the same time, a palm-sized ice blade had appeared in my hands. While it wasn't as sturdy as my ice knife, it was still plenty for cutting the hemp rope!

The rope gave and I landed on my feet, using the momentum to launch myself forward. My opponent, getting kicked in the face, was falling backwards, so I rushed forward, the palm-sized ice blade gliding toward his neck...

But he was able to react in time, as expected from a mercenary. Hao Pansi arched backward, so the strike narrowly missed his neck, but the ice blade still left a deep, red gash across his cheek. If he drank water this very moment, it was highly likely that some would spill from such a deep wound.

Next, I did a backward somersault, yanking out the machine gun that had been embedded in the wall, and fired a sweeping barrage as I walked into the room. All these actions were executed in one continuous flow, without even the slightest delay in between.

While opening fire, I peeked at Uncle and Auntie out of the corner of my eye. They were sitting in the corner, completely forgotten. As expected, mercenaries couldn't care less about a middle-aged couple.

Ratatatatatatatat—

The whole room was filled with the stuttering of the machine gun, punctuated by one or two cracks of handguns returning fire. Then, complete silence took over. Although I hadn't used up the ammunition, there weren't any more targets to attack.

From start to finish, Uncle and Auntie stared at me with wide eyes and hadn't even had the time to react. The sequence of events just now happened in the span of at most ten seconds or so.

Without any time to spare, I rushed out of the room without even bothering to pick up my ice staff or ice knife. I slammed the door behind me and flung an arm backward. The lock was sealed off with ice, so no one could get into the room to harm Uncle or Auntie.

As for why I dashed off without even bothering to undo Uncle and Auntie's ropes was because Hao Pansi had escaped. I never imagined that he would be able to get away even in that situation. After crashing to the ground, he immediately ducked and wove through, not intending to fight back in the slightest. He seized the opportunity to grab Fatty as a shield and raced out of the room.

Even though I had fired a dozen odd rounds at him, I couldn't kill him. But I had to finish off all the other guys as well. Otherwise, they would get the chance to grab Uncle and Auntie, so I had no choice but to let

him go.

But I was not planning on letting Hao Pansi get away. Just like he'd said, if you start something, you've got to finish it. If I didn't kill off all the opposition, just having someone remember a grudge would pose a danger to me. Now that I had killed off his mercenaries, it was impossible for him not to hate me—not when he had lost his team in this apocalyptic world.

The moment I exited the room, I caught a glimpse of Hao Pansi's back. He was already at the very end of the corridor, about to jump down. If he got out of the house, then it would become difficult to find him.

I froze a dozen odd small ice knives out of the air. Just as I was about to fire them at him, the lanky guy came barging out of the room next to me. He stared at me in shock, but didn't hesitate to open fire with the two guns in his hands. As expected, a mercenary would mercilessly shoot without hesitation.

I immediately flung myself backward, blocking myself with the ice knives. The bullets either whizzed over head or were deflected by the ice knives. Then, I kicked upwards at my opponent's knee. While he was falling, I sprang up, grabbed one of the ice knives hanging in mid-air and drove it right into his jaw from below.

Something fell from his hand. *He was actually able to pull this off in the instant before he died, so his ability was probably speed—shit, it's a grenade!*

Watching that lethal weapon fall onto the floor without its pin, I

growled, thrusting both hands out. The air started crackling, and a stream of ice shot out from between my palms straight to the ground, drawing out a river of ice that froze over the grenade.

Cold sweat dripped from my forehead... *It didn't go off, good.*

Turning away from the grenade, I rushed to the end of the corridor and hopped onto the railing. I looked down in time to see Hao Pansi just about to exit the house. So I leaped down, sprinted forward then jumped, kicking both feet straight at Hao Pansi's neck. I wanted to snap it so bad!

Hao Pansi was opening the door at that moment, and he was thrown out through the doors by my running kick. I heard the sound of bones cracking, which should have been enough to kill him, but I had acquired a habit from fighting aberrants for too long—making a killing blow wasn't enough, you had to make sure your target was ripped to shreds like a scene out of a horror movie!

I landed and planted one foot on his head. Holding up my right hand with all fingers straight, I formed an ice blade with the palm of my hand as the base. Then I severed his neck with one blow and wrung off his head.

Just as I was about to smash it into mush from force of habit, I suddenly remembered that this wasn't an aberrant, but a human being. He was pretty much dead the moment his head was cut off. With his head severed, he wouldn't start biting maniacally like an aberrant could.

I didn't have to re-enact a horror movie.

Breathing a sigh of relief, I looked up to see five or six people standing in front of me, all armed with guns. They were in position, ready to fire at any given moment, but I wasn't too concerned about that.

"Dàgē." Holding onto Hao Pansi's head with one hand, I looked around for a moment but only saw Dàgē and the mercenaries. I asked, "Did you find Junjun?"

"She's at the back. I didn't let her come." Dàgē looked back at me, his expression no different from normal. So it really did seem that Shujun was fine.

I sighed with relief. *Good, Shujun is back without a scratch on her, so this incident didn't result in any major consequences.*

I flung Hao Pansi's head casually to one side before suddenly remembering something important. "Oh shoot, I better help Uncle and Auntie undo their restraints."

I turned to leave.

For some reason, from behind came the sound of someone swallowing hard.



Everyone headed inside the house, which was littered with corpses. Originally, Dàgē wanted to clean up with his troop before letting Shujun in. But I told him, "Dàgē, Junjun is going to have to face the

reality of the apocalypse sooner or later, unless you think we are so strong that we can keep her completely safe from any worry. But neither of us are, so it's probably easier for her to start small with dealing with corpses than suddenly jumping straight to killing living people."

Although I really wanted to protect Shujun and shield her from such cruel situations, my past experiences in the apocalypse told me loud and clear that it wasn't good to live under someone's wing. Even if Dàgē and I truly cared about her and shielded her from everything, as long as she didn't have the power to protect herself and her loved ones, she could only be protected to the bitter end. That was even crueler!

Dàgē considered this and nodded, saying, "You're right, but..." He suddenly reached out to ruffle my hair, sighing, "Dàgē really hoped he could protect you all of your lives."

"There's nothing wrong with Dàgē protecting us, but your Dìdì and Mèimei have grown up. Sometimes we want to protect Dàgē too, so give us a chance, Dàgē."

The corner of Dàgē's mouth tugged upwards. "So, you're not angry at me anymore?"

I blinked and replied quietly, "I was never angry, just sad and scared."

Rather than being pissed off, it would be better to say that I respected and feared and loved and was frightened of him. My feelings toward Dàgē were a jumbled mess, so it was hard to describe it exactly.

"Scared? Of me?" Dàgē looked stunned, and then said quickly, "Shuyu, I really would never hurt you!"

"It's not that! It's just, I'm worried, like, you'd think I'm not..." I stopped, but realization dawned on Dàgē's face.

Actually, I was beginning to feel that even if I wasn't completely Jiang Shuyu, some part of me was. Otherwise, why would I love Jiang Shuyu's family so much? But the more I loved Dàgē, Xiaomèi, Uncle, and Auntie, the more I became scared that I would lose them. I was terrified by the idea of them feeling that I wasn't the Jiang Shuyu they so deeply loved.

"Sorry, Dàgē had promised to believe you no matter what, but I broke my promise. I'm really sorry. It will never happen again."

Dàgē apologized again and again, almost making me burst into tears again. I could kill people without even batting an eye, no problem. But tears would start springing into my eyes because of just one word, "sorry." *You're really something, Jiang Shuyu!*

I quickly blinked away the tears. There was still the bunch of mercenaries nearby, and we still had to sort out the messed up house. During the battle just now, I hadn't actually killed everyone. The two women had also opened the door of the room they were holed up in, but they were so freaked out that they had immediately slammed the door shut again. I had been busy pursuing Hao Pansi, so I couldn't have cared less about them. Judging from their reactions, those two were probably pathetic beyond hope of redemption.

And they did turn out to be utterly pathetic. They didn't take the chance to run away while I was still tied up with killing Hao Pansi. They just hid in the room, shaking all the while. I really didn't know how to best describe these two hopeless cases, and that also made it difficult to know how to deal with these two women.

Zheng Xing scowled, remarking, "They're just women, and they're not mercs like Yunqian. They're probably just the mercenaries' family members or some people they picked up along the way. It doesn't seem right to kill them?"

What the hell? What do you mean by "just" women? Women are pretty scary in their own rights, okay? And they're even more vengeful than men! Just look at me—I blame everything on Cain, and I'm quite petty minded, so much so that you couldn't find space for forgiveness in me no matter how you tried.

I pointed at the rips in my clothes and the kiss marks that dotted my neck and chest, and reported, "They did this to me."

"Did they really violate you?" Dàgē suddenly asked.

W-what do you mean by "really violate"...? I flushed, hastily refuting, "No! They just molested me a bit."

I thought about suggesting at least beating them up. *If not, then I'd just have been taken advantage of for nothing! So no way in hell am I...* And I watched as Dàgē drew his dagger and slit their throats in one clean stroke, moving coolly like he was just polishing his blade.

I blinked and swallowed the words "beat up" right back down.

"Mm, then we'll just kill them."

Er, if not, what were you planning, Dàgē?

"Èrgē!"

Shujun dashed into the house and immediately leapt at me. When she saw what a mess I looked, her eyes reddened, though not in the sense that she wanted to cry, but rather that she was so angry, she was out for blood. *I must be seeing things 'cause I'm too hungry and tired. How could my sweet, good, gentle, little Junjun ever want to kill anyone?*

With heavy tones of remorse, she said, "Èrgē, I'm so sorry for what happened. By the time we discovered them, the house was already surrounded, so I could only randomly zap down one guy and run off to find Dàgē so he could fight them. But I never thought they would..." Her eyes reddened even further.

Um? Shujun was the one who reported to Dàgē?

My expression darkened, and I whipped my head around, asking, "Who was on guard duty today?"

"Me," Uncle confessed with a look of shame.

Er? Uncle? I was stunned and looked at him in bewilderment. Why on earth was Uncle on guard duty?

Dàgē explained, "We discovered a police station and wanted to search it for ammunition, but there were too many aberrants inside. We didn't have enough manpower, so we appointed Uncle for guard duty. Uncle and Auntie have been conducting archaeological digs around the world, so they know how to use guns for self-protection against bandits."

But out of all days, we had to encounter invaders today, who were mercenaries to boot. Uncle and Auntie had no way of holding the fort, and I just happened to be in bed, being miserably sick. Worse still, because I had reconciled with Dàgē the night before, I'd slept exceptionally well, to the point where I had only woken up after I'd been trussed up like a turkey. *Seriously, this rotten luck... Are there still any temples I could pray at? This is a really unlucky year!*

I held my head in my hands. This Jiang family really did have everything except for good luck! I mean, look at them—the Jiang parents both died and Jiang Shuyu was put into a coma out of the blue by a falling tile. We were in deep shit. If strength was the number one most important thing in the apocalyptic world, then luck was very solidly in second place.

"I never thought you were so strong! It's kind of scary!"

I turned. Ceng Yunqian shrilled, "It's so wrong with your looks! Watching a young, handsome lad holding a human head—I thought I was dreaming!"

Cain said with a face full of smiles, "Now that we've got Shuyu to help out, it looks like taking down that police station isn't a problem

anymore. Seriously, as expected of Boss's little bro, like father like son."

Xiao Sha snapped irritably, "Idiot foreigner. Don't use idioms randomly. They're not father and son."

"That's just a comparison! A metaphor!" Cain retorted.

Watching the mercenary troop joke around, without even a hint of hostility toward me, I couldn't help but stare in a daze, unsure of how to react.

"They're my brothers-in-arms who've gone through thick and thin with me. You'll get to know them soon enough." Dàgē ruffled my hair, the corner of his mouth twitching upwards. Then, he turned his eyes toward Ceng Yunqian and Lily, who were pretending to sulk, and chuckled, "Yes, even the women are my brothers, okay?"

I remained silent. After ten years of the apocalypse, I had become incredibly petty minded, so much so that you couldn't find space for forgiveness in me no matter how you tried. It was far too difficult for me to trust people lightly.

"Gē, stop chatting. We need to sort this out quickly." Shujun looked at the bloody room. Although she wasn't freaking out, her complexion was still rather pale.

Dàgē and I agreed.

By the time we sorted out the mess that was our house, I was so

famished, I could eat a whole elephant. Fortunately, this was when Shujun shouted, "It's time for dinner!" Junjun's angelic voice was always a pleasure to listen to, especially when she was calling us to eat.

During dinner, although I was incredibly hungry, I was so tired that I could barely keep my eyes open. The injury at my waist was hurting again, and I had almost run out of my ability power. This feeling of being on an almost empty gauge was simply unbearable...

"Shuyu."

I jolted awake, to see everyone looking at me, and quickly asked, "What? Who called me?"

Just now, I was so out of it, I hadn't even recognized the voice.

Shujun giggled. "Èrgē, you almost buried your nose into your bowl." I had almost dozed off. I abashedly looked down at my bowl. Thank god someone woke me up, because what was in the bowl was hot soup.

Dàgē asked, frowning, "Shuyu, are you okay?"

"I'm just sleepy," I replied honestly. "I've just recovered from my illness, and I used up too much of my ability today, so I'm a bit tired." Although the combat time was short today, I had let out all my powers in one explosive burst, so it was no way any easier than taking my time in hunting down aberrants.

"Then, eat and go to bed." Dàgē paused here, thinking over something, then added, "Go wash up in your room. Once I've healed your wounds, go sleep."

I nodded. Actually, I was almost done with my meal. After finishing the remaining few gulps of soup, I informed everyone that I was heading back to my room.

Strangely enough, everyone watched after me with yearning expressions. *Why?* I felt unsettled. Previously, I was practically as invisible as air at the dining table. Because I'd felt like I was sticking out like a sore thumb, I'd always eaten as fast as I could and left the dining table.

When back in my room, I simply wiped myself down and waited for Dàgē to come heal me. I hadn't gotten too much blood on myself, because one of the specialties of ice abilities was that it would freeze over the enemy's wounds and stop them from bleeding too much. Though, actually, this was more of a disadvantage, since I was helping to stop my enemies from bleeding out!

I took a peek under the bandages that were wrapped around my waist, and noticed that the wound had already scabbed over. But probably because of the intense action today, parts of the scabs had been ripped open and had started oozing blood again.

Dàgē walked in. The moment he saw my injuries, his brows immediately knitted together. But he didn't say anything, and just walked up to heal me. The warmth felt very comfortable, and I had to keep pinching myself to stop myself from drifting off during the healing

process.

After healing me, Dàgē wrapped up my wounds again, then suddenly said, "Shuyu, why don't you come sleep with me? This room's in bad condition."

Of course it wasn't in good shape—everything was riddled with bullet holes and a bunch of people had died here too. But seeing as I was the one who had done this with a machine gun, I couldn't really complain. Still, sleeping in a honeycombed room was better than sleeping with Dàgē!

Sleeping with Dàgē every night simply presented too much temptation to me. I worried that just the nose bleeds from getting turned on would make me anemic!

I shook my head hard.

"Why? Do you still not trust Dàgē?"

Seeing Dàgē's expression become more downhearted, I could only admit honestly, "Dàgē, you remember that I was a woman in my past life, right?"

Looking a little stunned, he asked, "And it's affecting you a lot?"

"More than a little." I could only respond this way. I mean, it wasn't just "more than a little;" I was 100% Guan Weijun!

Dàgē pondered a little and asked, "So you don't want to sleep with me

because I'm a man? You like men?"

This question hit the bullseye! I'd never dreamed in my past life that I would experience such embarrassing things as being the younger brother who was confessing to his older brother that he liked guys. I responded with a grimace, "I'm not sure."

I really had no idea which gender I preferred. Although I was occasionally tempted by Dàgē, whenever Mèimei leapt into my arms, that soft, fragrant body of hers also shook me to my very core. I was such a lowlife!

Jiang Shuyu, you bastard, stop being such a sis-con!

But then again, Jiang Shuyu probably really wanted to rage at Guan Weijun to stop drooling after his older brother.

The struggle!

"It's fine, don't worry too much," Dàgē said as he ruffled my hair, "This kind of stuff isn't a big deal. Yunqian also likes women."

...Don't suddenly say stuff like this out of the blue! Dàgē, you've shocked your Dìdì!

"You'll be fine as long as you know what you want."

I know I want to do my Dàgē and marry my Xiaomèi, so like hell that's fine!

"If you don't want to share a room with me, why don't you go to Shujun's room to sleep? This room still smells of blood, so you shouldn't sleep here. At least wait until the smell's gone before coming back here."

"It's really okay. The smell doesn't bother me." I hesitated and then reminded him gently, "Gē, I've lived ten years in the apocalypse, so I'm not a gentle little eighteen year-old."

Dàgē looked at me, and then suddenly snorted. He said in an amused voice, "So you're such a bad boy that you would sneak out in the middle of the night to hunt for evolution crystals for your entire family to eat? Which I then poured away?"

I replied awkwardly, "Well, it's not the same for family."

He smiled as he ruffled my hair. *Why does he keep doing that?* I was eighteen already and he still kept ruffling it. By now, my hair had reached my shoulders, not to mention my hair was thick and stiff, so the moment he ruffled it, it would poof up into a messy bird's nest.

"If it doesn't bother you, then go sleep. Rest a few days, and once you're better, come with us. Don't go hunting aberrants by yourself anymore. Dàgē worries about you."

Hearing that, I frowned a little. I decided to come clean with Dàgē and explain about the situation with the mercenaries.

"Dàgē, I don't want to go with the mercs." I said calmly, "I don't like them."

"Why not?" Dàgē didn't seem surprised. Then again, I had been pretty obvious about it.

"They don't like me."

This line came out like a kid's whining. I flushed a little. I was already thirty-five years old, and I was still whining to Dàgē. And what was worse was that Dàgē was only twenty-seven! It was plenty shameful, whining to someone younger than me. Fortunately, Jiang Shuyu's appearance was of an eighteen year old's, otherwise it would be really disgusting, right?

Dàgē replied, puzzled, "Don't like you? Who said so?"

Do I really need someone to spell it out for me? I laid out my reasoning, "They must be angry and hate me for hiding the stuff about evolution crystals."

"Of course they would be angry that you took all the loot for yourself, but you're only an eighteen year old kid. It's not like they'd be angry at you forever. And besides, everyone was able to get a fair amount of evolution crystals afterwards, so they wouldn't really hold a grudge against you for that."

I snapped back in anger, "If they didn't hold a grudge, why would they refuse to share the crystals with you? And they even said that they would deduct your portion against what I took, so what am I supposed to make of that?"

If Shujun hadn't told me, and Dàgē had slowed down behind the others in terms of powering up, how could he still lead with strength less than theirs? It was likely that someone would rebel, wanting to take over Dàgē's place, and I would never allow that to happen!

"That was what I proposed," Dàgē replied, frowning. "Shuyu, they're my brothers. Ever since I ran the JDT, I've never let my brothers down. That was the loot from battles that they risked their lives in, so it should have gone to them in the first place."

I exclaimed, "And if they became stronger than you in the future? What then?"

"They're already stronger than me."

Dàgē responded, completely stunning me. Dàgē clapped his hands to my shoulders, speaking in utmost seriousness, "Shuyu, a mercenary troop is all about teamwork, and not individual strength. Ceng Yunqian's marksmanship is better than mine, Xiao Sha's subterfuge skills are better than mine, Zheng Xing's medical skills—"

"I was talking about combat strength!" I forcefully cut in. If he went on, he'd probably keep comparing to the point where he'd be talking about how Lily's chest was bigger than his.

Dàgē said in equal parts good humor and amusement, "So marksmanship isn't combat power?"

Not... in the future.

"Cain could probably win in a fight against me." Dàgē admitted, "I may be better at unarmed combat, but the moment he gets his hands on nunchucks, I might be the one who'd lose."

Cain's so strong? I started to become warier.

"Shuyu, there are no weaklings in my mercenary troop. What's the point of gathering people who are weaker than me in everything?"

Dàgē declared proudly, "My Jiang Dominion Troop will only take in the strongest!"

Only take in the strongest...

I gaped blankly at Dàgē, who didn't seem the slightest bit worried that someone would be more powerful than him. The only thing I could think of was, *why hadn't anyone like this appeared in my previous life? Could this be a so-called "leader's charisma?"*

In the past, "he" too was a leader of a group, and over half the evolution crystals the group got went straight into his belly. Especially for us women, almost all the evolution crystals we got went to him. It got to the point where sometimes, I felt like I was a mother raising a child rather than his girlfriend.

He would also go through pleasantries like "You are my good brothers," and what not, especially when recruiting useful new blood. He acted like he was all for justice and righteousness, like he would really sacrifice himself for others. But I knew all too well that he wasn't the kind of person who would allow anyone in his group to be more

powerful than him, the leader.

By taking away half of people's evolution crystals in the name of supporting the group, together with this group of idiot women feeding him, no one would ever become stronger than him.

Even though I hated him, I had followed in his footsteps, with my petty-mindedness narrower than a needle's eye, as I refused to allow anyone to be stronger than me.

Dàgē continued speaking, "Shuyu, the ones who followed me were all those who believed me when I told them that the apocalypse was coming."

Belief and trust... I remained silent. I too had once trusted people, but the price was giving up my life after ten painful years of living, and this lesson was deeply etched into my heart.

"Don't stay cooped up in your room forever, and don't leave just like that once you're done eating without even saying a single word. Try getting along with them, okay?"

Seeing Dàgē's hopeful and worried expression, I once again thought back to the "him" in my memories.

These two people were really very different.

Then, should I also be different too?

I nodded.

Footnotes

¹ **"Hao Pansi":** Originally 郝思文(Hǎo Sīwén), his name is a pun on "好斯文(hǎo sīwén)" which means "very gentle/cultured." His name is one big pun and thus was translated as a pun.

Chapter #9: Joining the Mercenary Troop

After lunch, I strolled over to the living room and sat down. Everyone watched me curiously and Ceng Yunqian couldn't resist commenting, "How strange. You're not going back to your room to be depressed and all today?"

You're the one making me really depressed now!

Cain stroked his chin, asking, "So he's over his rebellious stage now?"

Like hell I'm going through a rebellious stage at the age of thirty-five!

"All right, don't bully the boy." Zheng Xing said unhappily, "What are you guys, kids?"

Dàgē looked me up and down and asked with concern, "You're not tired anymore?"

I nodded. I'd already rested for three days and I'd long gotten over my exhaustion. If not for the fact that Dàgē insisted on keeping me indoors, I'd have gone out hunting yesterday. Time was very precious in the apocalyptic world. *We can't afford to waste a single second!*

"Then, let's go to the police station in the afternoon—"

I immediately cut in, blurting out in one breath, "You need to share the evolution crystals with Junjun, Uncle, and Auntie. Otherwise, I'd rather go hunting aberrants by myself!"

With that, I sat back to watch their responses. This was the lowest I was willing to go. If they weren't willing to share, then we would each fight for our own portions, and they could forget about me going hunting with them!

Who'll agree and who'll object? I was betting that Cain would be in the objection camp. And anyhow, I was already extremely small-minded, so there was no way I could forgive him so quickly.

"So, what do you have to offer in exchange for their three portions of crystals?"

I can't believe it, it's Dàgē! I stared at him in disbelief. *Like, what the hell?*

Dàgē was sitting on the couch, his chin tilted back a little and his lips curved in a faint smile. His long legs were crossed and his interlaced fingers were resting on his knee. If someone took a picture of this, you would have a magazine cover right there, no photo editing needed.

But the feeling I got was that I wasn't facing Dàgē, but instead a sly fox! Even if this fox was extremely handsome, it wasn't enough to shake off the feeling of impending doom, like I was not only being tricked into selling myself, but I'd even have to count the cash from my sale.

Jiang Shutian chuckled lightly and remarked, "If you want cooperation, then we must first agree on a price. This is the fundamental rule of being a mercenary, and I can't make an exception, not even for my dìdì."

Zheng Xing shook his head, saying ,“Boss, stop teasing your little bro. He’s only eighteen. You’re being way too hard on him if you’re wanting him to negotiate using the merc laws.”

Even as a thirty-five year old I’m finding it difficult!

Everyone grinned from the sidelines, watching me put on a show.

Dammit! Dàgē, just whose Dàgē are you?

“What about you guys?”

I didn’t want to negotiate with Dàgē. There wasn’t any point in trying with him. I might as well just give up in total defeat. *Using his handsome looks is a really sly move... Wait, what am I thinking about? Dàgē hasn’t used his handsome looks. How’d I even arrive at that conclusion?*

Xiao Sha said curtly, “Boss is in charge of negotiating prices.”

The others nodded their agreement, watching this farce play out with leisurely expressions.

Anger flared up in me. I blinked, secretly creating a thin film of ice in my eyes. They immediately smarted from the pain. Although I couldn’t see myself, I was pretty sure my eyes had reddened. The film of ice also instantly melted, and though it didn’t amount to much water, it was just enough to make my eyes fill up with tears without spilling over.

After pretending to hold back my tears with all my might, I glared accusingly at Dàgē. *There's no way this wouldn't work on him!*

"Awww, he's gonna cry now," Lily said, feeling sorry for me. "Boss, that's enough already."

Zheng Xing gave Dàgē a hard look and sighed.

"I owe him one," Xiao Sha said grudgingly. "We can share some crystals with him."

Ceng Yunqian stared at me with sparkling eyes, complaining, "Boss, you're so lucky. Why did my mom never give birth to such an adorable pair of siblings for me?"

These handsome looks really were something. Jiang Shuyu was able to sway the hearts of people of all ages and genders, even of those who were into women. He didn't even need evolution crystals to be invincible!

But the most critical person, Dàgē, just looked at me with a smile that was not quite a smile... *Excuse me, Dàgē, shouldn't you be the first one to feel bad about this? Don't make an expression like you've realized something... Don't tell me that the Jiang Shuyu of the past also acted like a kicked puppy a lot?*

I really needed to ask Shujun later about what kind of person Jiang Shuyu was in the past... And while I was at it, ask about what kind of person Dàgē was as well. I suddenly felt like I didn't know him at all.

"Dàgē's teasing Èrgē again." Shujun entered the living room, and the moment she saw my eyes brimming with tears, she immediately took my side. "Be careful, or he'll start ignoring you again. I'm not going to help you this time, Dàgē."

Sob sob, Shujun, you're the best! I don't want to lust after Dàgē anymore. It's best to marry Mèimei after all.

"It's not me this time," Dàgē said with amusement. "It's your Èrgē who's pretending to be sad. And he's doing a pretty good job of it. Look at him, that expression."

"And it's definitely you who started it first, Dàgē. Since when was it ever Èrgē who started anything?" Shujun pouted, speaking unhappily, "You've always liked teasing Èrgē. I don't know how many times you've made him cry when we were little."

Why is everyone grinning at me? I wasn't the one who was teased to tears... but this wasn't very persuasive at all, coming from someone whose eyes were brimming with tears. I blinked away my tears; otherwise, I would be proving Shujun's words to be true.

Cain said admiringly, "As expected of Boss. Only you could tease such a cute little bro from a young age!"

Shut up! You think I won't hold yet another grudge against you?

"Dàgē!" Shujun's expression darkened and she warned him in a low voice, "If you tease Èrgē again, your food will taste especially bad in the future!"

Dàgē said helplessly, "I haven't teased him in a long time. Can't I tease him just a little?"

"No!" Shujun pouted. "No teasing! Èrgē's been through too much lately. If you tease him again, you'll only get peanuts and plain rice."

Dàgē propped up his chin with one hand, looking at Mèimei helplessly. *So Mèimei is Dàgē's weak spot, even more effective than Dìdì!* I was enlightened. *In the future, I'm marrying Mèimei, no doubts about it!*

Dàgē took back his sly, fox-like face, and under Mèimei's supervision, started to explain to me seriously.

"Because there are too few of us, Uncle and Auntie need to start learning to guard the base. So, the two of them can get one portion of crystals. I'm the leader, so I can get two portions. The others all saw your ability a few days ago and are willing to let you join. They'll also assign two portions to you."

My eyes lit up. Dàgē's two portions could be used to make up for Uncle and Auntie's portion, and my two portions could be shared with Shujun, so it was just perfect.

...Wait, so this means Dàgē was really teasing me just now? I was shocked.

"Going forward, we still need to go further afield to look for supplies and try to find out if there are other survivors. After a while, people will start establishing colonies, and at that time, we will need to assess

whether or not to head over or to continue securing our base. All of this requires manpower. Shuyu, this isn't a world where you can survive just by yourself."

I nodded. *No matter how strong you are, what's the point of living if you're surrounded only by aberrants?*

"Okay," I replied with a nod, "I can even check how everyone's powers are developing and maybe give some pointers."

The moment I said this, everyone's eyes shone. They couldn't sit still anymore and started bombarding me with questions.

"I've been wanting to ask since a few days ago. Xiao Yu, your powers are really strong! How on earth do you practice in order to use them like that?"

"I've eaten a lot of crystals and my physical abilities have gone up, but I really don't know how to train my powers."

"I'll pay you crystals as the tuition fee—please be my tutor!"

I pondered for a moment, then replied, "I can't teach so many of you. Split yourselves into two groups. Junjun and I will take charge of one group each."

I had already told Shujun how to train her powers, and she had also taught Uncle and Auntie. So there was no problem with her teaching. Besides, this way, the mercenaries would owe her a favor, and we were going to call in that favor for sure in the future!

"I'll join Junjun's group!" Cain immediately shouted.

Fuck off! I growled, "Only Yunqian and Lily can join Junjun's group!"

"Yunqian is more dangerous than me—she likes women!" Cain declared triumphantly.

Dammit, I totally forgot. I hastily corrected myself, "Only Lily and Xiao Sha can join Junjun's group!"

Cain said incredulously, "Wow! So you know Xiao Sha is into guys?"
Shit! What's with these people?

"Who did you say was into guys?!" Xiao Sha snarled.

"You!" Cain said in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, "Didn't you date a guy before? The others didn't notice, but I saw!"

"That was just once!" Xiao Sha snapped hatefully, "He was really cute, so much so he wasn't any different from a girl. And anyway, we broke up not even a month in!"

"It counts, even if you've broken up!" Cain turned to speak to Jiang Shutian, "Boss, watch out and keep a close eye on your little bro. With Shuyu's looks, who knows? Maybe Xiao Sha's already fallen for him."

Honestly, talking about good looks like I've grown a second head or something, when clearly I'm jaw-droppingly good looking, handsome as hell, and adored by everyone— having praised myself to this extent,

I suddenly felt a little embarrassed.

Xiao Sha shot up from where he was sitting, his face flushed red and veins popping at his neck, and he yelled, "Cain, take it outside and let's see who's better!"

Cain shrugged, replying casually, "Are you sure you want to fight me head on?"

Xiao Sha's face twisted even more at that. I remembered not long ago hearing about how he was better at stealth, while Cain could be a match for Dàgē when he was armed. *I'll never believe that Cain can defeat Dàgē. That simply won't happen! Dàgē is just too humble, definitely!*

"Watch out that you don't get shot while you're sleeping!" Although Xiao Sha sat himself back down, the ferocity in his eyes had grown even more.

Cain pretended to be scared and exclaimed shyly, "Oh my, what are you planning to do in the dark depths of the night? You just said you only liked the cute ones?"

Xiao Sha hurled a chopstick at him, and Cain dodged it easily while laughing heartily.

"Stop messing around, the two of you!" Zheng Xing said somewhat angrily, "There are kids here too, so what are you two running your mouths for?! Boss, say something too. Don't let them set a bad example for Shuyu and Shujun."

Dàgē glanced at Shujun and said, "Shujun, help Auntie with cleaning up the table. Don't stay here and listen."

Shujun pouted her defiance in the most adorable way, but she still obediently headed over to help Auntie carry the bowls and chopsticks to the kitchen.

Then, Dàgē looked at me for a moment and chuckled lightly, "Shuyu's already eighteen, so there's nothing he can't listen to. If he likes, he can even get together with Xiao Sha."

Everyone immediately spat out whatever food, coke, tea, or beer in their mouths.

...If only I never confessed my sexual ambiguity to Dàgē last night.

Dàgē rested both hands on the table and said with immense discontent, "You think my sister and Aunt don't have enough to do? Everyone, clean up your own mess!"

Fortunately, I hadn't spat out anything and looked on as everyone reluctantly wiped down the table and chairs. Then, I gleefully returned to my room to prepare for the expedition to the police station. *Boy* did that feel good.

But strictly speaking, my so-called preparation just involved picking up my two ice weapons and my large backpack only. Others might need to bring water as well, but with my ice powers, all I had to do was melt the ice to drink.

When I headed back down to the living room, I was the first person to arrive.

I rested the ice staff on the table. By now, the shaft was already five centimeters in diameter, and I wouldn't be able to hold it if it got any thicker. I no longer had to layer on any more ice. Instead, I was seriously considering whether or not to dismantle the blade from a knife, to use as the base for an added spearhead. This way, not only could I whack my enemies, I could stab them too.

All right, let's try it when I'm back.

When I looked up, everyone had already arrived, and their eyes were fixed on the ice weapon lying on the table. The lust in their eyes was like they were eyeing a hot, naked woman on the table.

"Shuyu," Dàgē asked, "Is it very difficult to make weapons like that? Can you make a few more?"

Hearing that, I immediately got Dàgē's meaning. After looking around at everyone, I replied, "Yunqian-jiě, try touching it. Just use one finger to poke at it."

Yunqian rejoiced and quickly prodded it with one finger. But she immediately gave a cry and yanked back her hand.

"Xiao Yu, you hate me this much?" Yunqian showed her finger to everyone, which was a bit red. Just that moment of contact was enough to injure her. She said dejectedly, "I just yelled at you a few times. You don't have to take it to heart, you know?"

"It's not that!" I immediately flushed and retorted, "It's because your water powers make you more resistant to ice powers than anyone else, so that's why I let you touch it."

I'm really not being vengeful, or I would've asked Cain to touch it!

Even so, Yunqian looked at me dolefully, like she didn't believe me at all. Suddenly, Dàgē grabbed the ice stave with one hand.

"Dàgē, let go!" I yelled, and immediately snatched the ice stave from his hand.

Dàgē opened his hand, revealing that everything up to his wrist had turned purple-blue. It was quite obviously frost-bite, and a much more serious case than Yunqian's injury at that.

I was exasperated. *I know that Dàgē did it to prove what I said, but he didn't have to use his whole hand and refuse to let go!*

"Dàgē, like this, how're you supposed to go to the police station later?"

Dàgē smiled, and his palm shone with a gentle light. The purple-blueness receded gradually, until there wasn't even a single trace left. I sighed in admiration. "Dàgē, your healing powers have become stronger."

"I'm better at healing myself than others," Dàgē explained, then added after a moment, "I have pretty good regenerative skills, so even if I left an injury like that, it'd be more or less recovered by the evening."

As expected of Dàgē! Surely, it's just a matter of time before he becomes immortal?

Thinking back, Xiao Qi, who also had healing powers, was nowhere as powerful, and because of this, her healing abilities were about as useless as my enhanced vision. But at least I was his girlfriend in name, whereas she was at best his first mistress, so she had been in an even more pitiful situation than I was.

Later, I stopped hating her. We'd even help each other pretty often, and she would heal my small injuries. And towards the end, she became even more reliant on me than on him. He might have even forgotten that he had taken in such a woman so long ago. After all, Xiao Qi's looks were at most average, and although she was a few years younger than me, she couldn't compare to those young girls in their teens or twenties.

Lily asked, "So, we can't use your ice weapons?"

"Not exactly." I responded honestly, "If you use your energy to protect your hands, you can pick it up. But right now, your powers are nowhere as good as mine. You'd end up using all your energy in fending off the chill from the weapons, which is a bit pointless. But by the time your powers are on the same level as mine, you can create your own weapons with your powers, so you won't need my ice weapons either."

Looks of realization dawned on everyone's faces. Here, Dàgē unhesitatingly snatched away the ice stave again. Only, this time, he

didn't get frostbite. A layer of gentle light protected his hand and warded off the chill from the ice stave.

"Xiao Yu, make me one?" Dàgē said blandly, "I feel like I don't need much power to hold off the cold."

I really have to hand it to you. Dàgē, do you have to be so godly in using your healing powers?

"Sure," I agreed obediently, but quickly added, "but this will take some time. It isn't normal ice. It's actually been tempered. And one round of tempering doesn't even create a 0.1 centimeter thick layer of tempered ice."

Dàgē nodded. "No rush."

Although he had said no rush, in my mind, I was already starting to think about what weapon best suited Dàgē. Knives were definitely a no go. Just imagine someone as mighty as Dàgē, who could inspire awe in all with just one roar, pulling out a short dagger—it would look absolutely ridiculous! Not to mention, I'd feel extremely bad for those people who were awestricken by Dàgē and travelled all the way to become his subordinates just to see that.

A longsword like the Ice Emperor's seemed just right, but I didn't have anything suitable to work with as a base. If I had to create a solid longsword out of the air, by the time I had finished, Dàgē might have already evolved to the point where one punch was enough to sink an entire continent, and things like weapons would just become mere ornaments.

"Heh."

Who's laughing? I looked up in suspicion, only to see the awe-inspiring man looking at me with mirth dancing in his eyes. *What? I haven't done anything?*

"Dàgē?"

"You're daydreaming again." Dàgē shook his head, remarking with equal parts amusement and despair, "I said we were setting off, and everyone's gone out, but you're still standing here. And you even shook your head or made a face every so often. I really have no idea what's going on in that head of yours."

I looked toward the door to see everyone laughing so hard, they couldn't even stand straight and had to lean against the door frame.

"I'll change this habit in the future!" I said grouchily, not wanting to make more of a fool out of myself.

"Don't!" Yunqian shrilled, "We've been fighting aberrants day in, day out, and it's getting super boring. Entertainment like you is hard to come by, you know?"

Keep talking, yeah? Then you'll be Cain's replacement as my scapegoat for everything!

Having made a fool of myself, I tightened my expression to stop others from laughing at me and followed everyone to the car parked at

the back of the house.

Originally, I'd thought that we'd need to split into a few vehicles, but in the end, everyone sat together in a minibus. I didn't know where they had gotten their hands on this vehicle, but it was pretty handy and could seat twenty people. At the same time, it wasn't as massive as those tour buses that were hard to maneuver.

Being on the first mission with everyone, I really was a little nervous, especially given how tense our previous relationship was. I was a little worried I wouldn't fit in.

Like now. The others were just casually chatting to each other on the minibus. Most of them were talking about interesting stories the merc troop had come across in the past, but I didn't know a thing about those, so there was no way I could chip in as well.

"Shuyu," Lily suddenly called out to me.

"Eh?" I immediately responded, to avoid being thought as spacing out again.

She gave me a big wink and said flirtatiously, "You've dated before, right? Tell us a little bit about your love life."

Love life? The tragic love story of my previous life was indeed an epic tale, but it wasn't something I could talk about with them. *As for Jiang Shuyu's love life...*

"I don't remember." I was very troubled by this. I really hoped I

wouldn't have some kind of former girlfriend popping out somewhere down the line.

"No, he's never dated." Dàgē rescued me. "There were a lot of things he had to take care of at home, especially once I set up the merc troop. Uncle and Auntie weren't home much either. Although we still had Lin-bó and some cleaners who would come in periodically, Shujun was very attached to her Èrgē since she was little, so the moment classes ended, she had to be able to see Shuyu. It was only recently, now that Shujun's grown up a little, that Shuyu has had a little time for himself. But then, he had to prep for uni entrance exams, so he didn't have time to think about things like that."

Once he'd gotten into university, he was immediately smacked on the head by a tile and spent over a month in a coma. Then came the apocalypse.

Everyone looked at me, their eyes saying, "Rest in peace." *Goddammit, I'm still alive, okay?!*

With Jiang Shuyu's looks, it was guaranteed that he'd get a date even in these apocalyptic days. *If I really wanted a girlfriend, it wouldn't be hard to have a love life that's as exciting as never ending fireworks!*

Dàgē patted me on my back, comforting me, "Don't worry. Once the time is right, we should start looking around. You'll definitely find someone."

Don't talk about these expeditions like they're just for helping me look for a partner, Dàgē!

"Why the *hell* are we still talking about love in the apocalypse?!"

Not to mention, my previous love life was such a mess. I had really had enough of it and wasn't the slightest bit interested in this kind of stuff!

Cain snickered as he said, "Precisely because it's the apocalypse. Aside from lovey dovey things, what else is there to do?"

That was true. That was why the apocalypse was full of all kinds of perverts. Regardless of whether the women, pretty boys, or even twelve or thirteen year olds were interested or not, some folks would still force themselves onto them for some physical loving.

I scowled. "It best be consensual. Don't force yourself on others!"

"Hah," Cain snorted, then said proudly, "Take a look around you. Which one of us would ever even need to come on hard to get laid?"

I reflexively looked around. This merc troop's looks really were quite good.

Cain. What more needed to be said about him? He was the stereotypical blond haired, blue-eyed handsome foreigner, with teeth so white he could do ads for toothpaste.

Lily was probably a foreigner as well, or a mix. Although her pronunciation was no different from the locals, that copper skin and deep features singled her out. Even her body didn't look anything like

the locals. Her body was curvaceous, with a big bust, narrow waist, and a round, firm bottom. That S-shaped figure of hers was really quite something!

Ceng Yunqian had a prettier face than Lily, especially those refined eyes and eyebrows. Even though she couldn't be called pale, given her work as a mercenary, the healthy skin tone couldn't hide her elegant features. Her eyes in particular were beautiful, with large, dark irises contrasting sharply against her eye whites and accented with long and lush lashes. It was just a pity that she wasn't as well endowed, with barely any curves to speak of. I mean, her biceps were almost bigger than her chest.

Xiao Sha looked the youngest. I suspected he wasn't older than twenty-five. His expression was always cold and bland, with single-lidded, narrow eyes and thin lips. Although he couldn't be regarded as handsome or pretty, he was at least very cool looking.

Zheng Xing was the oldest out of everyone and was probably in his forties. He wasn't as clean shaven as Cain, but even so, he didn't look bad. He just looked like a mature man.

Then there was Dàgē. If I looked too closely or started describing too much, I was worried I'd get so turned on, I'd start having a nose bleed and be forever humiliated for the rest of my life!

After taking a good, hard look at all of them and thinking about it, I understood why they looked good. They were all mercenaries, so they had pretty good figures after undergoing training. A good figure immediately gave them at least an eight out of ten, so there was no

way they'd look bad.

Yunqian snapped at Cain, "How can you be so proud of your looks with Boss and Shuyu next to you? Go look in the mirror later, idiot. And try again in your next life when you're part of the Jiang family!"

Cain immediately protested, "I'm just a different type from Boss! I don't look any worse than he does. As for Shuyu..."

He looked at me and trailed off. Everyone also turned to stare at my face silently.

I could totally understand their reactions. I also frequently made different poses and expressions in front of the mirror in silence.

"...He's just a kid!" Cain said through gnashed teeth.

"Although Cain's just comforting himself, Shuyu really is still quite young." Yunqian chuckled, "Still need to wait."

Wait for what? I thought you're into women? Although my soul was a woman's, my body definitely wasn't.

"Boss, you best take good care of Shuyu and Shujun." Even Zheng Xing, who was driving and hadn't even made a peep the entire way, spoke up in a worried tone of voice, "It's the apocalypse now, and there aren't any more laws. His and Shujun's looks will probably bring trouble."

Dàgē just smiled and said without a care in the world, "Xiao Yu will

definitely stand up for himself, and he's strong enough to do so. As for Shujun..." Here, he gave a cold laugh, and said boastfully, "With me and Xiao Yu around, no one can even dream of harming so much as a hair on Shujun!"

That's right! If anyone dares to even touch Shujun, I'll slice them into a thousand pieces and won't let them know the peace of death!

Everyone shivered collectively. "You really are brothers. Those expressions of yours are identical in how scary they are."

What do you mean, "identical"? I didn't look that much like Dàgē, but rather, my looks were closer to Shujun's. When I'd looked at the full family portrait earlier, I saw that me and Shujun looked like our mother, with only our noses like our father's, while Dàgē was almost cast out of the same mould as our father.

"We're almost there," Zheng Xing cut through the laughter and chatter calmly. "Prepare to sortie."

With that, everyone sobered up and burst into a flurry of action. They checked what they were bringing, inspected their guns, and so on. Their movements were extremely quick and looked very professional. I too picked up the two sections of my ice staff and started freezing them into one long staff. In the past, I would only go through these motions right before combat, because a long staff was not suited to covert action. But this time, it was a team mission, and the target was to break into the police station that was full of aberrants. I couldn't imagine this mission being stealthy in the slightest, so it was best to prepare my staff and see where things went.

Watching everyone's busy hands, I suddenly thought of something important.

"Hey, guys, you best start being less reliant on guns. In two years' time, guns will be useless, and powers will be the most important!"

Everyone was immediately distracted by what I said, but Dàgē didn't seem surprised and nodded as he spoke, "Guns and ammo will run out."

"Not just that. As the aberrants get hit by more and more bullets, they will start evolving to prevent being hurt by bullets. By the second year, the smaller caliber guns will be useless, and in the third year, guns are really only used to bully the weak and needy. Well, the high caliber guns might still be of some use."

At my words, everyone's expressions clouded over.

I elaborated further, "If you infuse your energy onto the bullets, guns aren't entirely useless. But as the apocalypse progresses, guns will become harder and harder to find. Good weapons all need go through a long period of tempering. So for things like bullets that are expendable, it's a waste of energy to spend too much time tempering them, but if you don't temper them enough, they won't penetrate the aberrants' shells. At most, you can use them as an auxiliary weapon, but if you use it as your primary weapon, it won't be good enough no matter how much or little energy you use."

I frowned. "Then again, I seem to remember hearing about people

with certain abilities who would specialize in forging sniping bullets. They'd be able to kill aberrants in one shot and didn't require any gunpowder. But as for the specifics on how it's done, I don't know."

Was it a special power or just the use of a normal power? For the previous life me, this kind of question was far too deep and untouchable. Although "he" counted as an elite ability user too, he was so secretive that no one could ever dream of knowing the bounds of his ability.

"Shuyu's prophetic dreams are really amazing," Lily said in disbelief, "Aren't your dreams too detailed? How'd you even know stuff like that?"

Prophetic dreams? I guessed this was how Dàgē had described it to everyone else.

I thought for a moment. If I didn't tell them certain facts, it would be very difficult to explain why I knew so many things. Or perhaps they wouldn't ask in deference to Dàgē, but it would be very difficult for them not to harbor suspicions deep down inside. If these suspicions accumulated over time, it wouldn't be good for anyone. There was no telling if there was someone else like me who would always think negatively.

I decided to give a quick summary of things. "That's because I dreamed a dream that was ten years long. In the dream, I wasn't Jiang Shuyu, but a very ordinary woman. At the beginning of the apocalypse, she just ran around trying to survive, so whatever I say about the first few years of the apocalypse might not be too accurate. I also don't know much about the deeper things going on in the

background. I just know the general developments in the world over the first ten years of the apocalypse.”

Contrary to expectations, everyone became very excited on hearing this.

“That’s more than enough!” Xiao Sha made a rare show of expression, the corner of his lips lifting a fraction in what should be a smile. “Just knowing about the evolution crystals was enough. I never thought I could become this quick, and even power-wise I’m twice as strong as before.”

When I heard that, I actually became a little worried. Going by how many evolution crystals they had had, doubling one’s strength wasn’t actually much. When humanity first started eating crystals, the effects were extremely impressive, particularly with respect to power. Even for ordinary ability users, as long as they still had power stored inside their bodies, their strength would swell up to multiples of their original levels. It seemed everyone was still too reliant on guns these days and were still unfamiliar with the use of their powers.

Yunqian gave an exaggerated laugh and yelled, “Aw yeah, we don’t have to worry about anything for ten years!”

The moment I heard that, I immediately dashed cold water over that notion. *I can’t let them let their guards down!*

“You can’t! Life will become harder and harder in the days to come. We’ve been very lucky recently and had things real easy, but the apocalypse isn’t a joke! Aberrants will grow stronger at a frightening

pace. If we don't eat enough evolution crystals and train our powers, they might even overtake us!"

Everyone stared fixedly at me at that. *But what? What's with the expression in everyone's eyes?*

The door was suddenly pulled open and just as I raised my staff to guard position, I saw Zheng Xing poke his head in from outside. Without knowing it, the minibus had already stopped.

So we've arrived?

Zheng Xing gave a faint smile as he said, "I told you Shuyu's a good boy. Although he's made some mistakes in the past and made a fuss of things, he's still a good kid. He'll get things sooner or later. I mean, look at him now. Hasn't he started to think about the team?"

I stared.

"Kids at their rebellious stage are all like that," Yunqian said like it was the most natural thing in the world, "When I was his age, I'd even beat up my dad over little things! Boss, you're lucky your dìdì hasn't punched you a few times."

Like hell, I still want to live! Punching Dàgē is a stupid thing to do and should never be done! At most, I'd secretly fantasize about tying him up for some S&M— who asked him to pour away my coffee?

Dàgē stood up and ruffled my hair, saying, "If you want to punch me, you'll have to do it using your own strength. Even if I was in the wrong,

I won't go easy on you."

"Dàgē, if you keep rubbing my head, I really will want to punch you!"

After a glance at my reflection in the window, I couldn't resist snapping savagely at him when I saw my hair exploding into a bird's nest again.

Dàgē burst into hearty laughter and actually reached out to ruffle my hair again. I never imagined Dàgē would do this intentionally, and the bird's nest exploded into further messiness.

...Someday, I'll tie up Dàgē for some S&M!

Chapter #10: Mission at the Police Station

Everyone had gotten off the minibus, so I collected myself too and followed them—*after all, I promised myself that I wouldn't make a fool of myself anymore!*

The minibus had been parked a little distance away from the police station, probably to keep the sounds of the motor from startling the aberrants in the police station.

I felt a little uneasy as I gazed at the cluster of buildings not far from the police station, so I asked, "Is this close to the city?"

"You can say this is on the outskirts of the city," Xiao Sha replied.

I hesitated a bit before nodding and keeping my silence.

Urban areas were extremely dangerous because there were simply too many people in cities to begin with. Naturally, this meant that the humans-turned-aberrants were so numerous that they were impossible to defend against. But the wilderness wasn't safe either—animals and plants turned aberrants were even more dangerous. So the suburbs, where there were the fewest humans, plants, and animals, were actually the safest place.

I'd originally wanted to hole up in the suburbs for a year and a half and only go out hunting nearby. Only after we had eaten a year's worth of crystals and were strong enough to protect ourselves would we consider the next steps.

However, from the looks of things, this initial plan was a joke. The more you ate low-tiered evolution crystals, the smaller their effects became. Since the suburbs were safest, with the fewest people, plants, and animals, it was also the hardest for any strong aberrants to develop. There was no way we could get enough high-tiered crystals.

Besides, the most impossible hope in the apocalyptic world was safety.

Given my current progress, ordinary crystals had little effect on me. By the time I'd had ten or so more of them, they would have no effect on me at all.

Which means the only choice is to go hunting in the city for tier one aberrants, or even tier two or three ones...

Ten years into the apocalypse, many suspected that the Ice Emperor, one of the twelve elites at the time, had already exceeded the eighth tier.

Of the twelve elites in the world, only three were human.

Looking at the distant cluster of buildings, an indescribable feeling welled up within me.

In my previous life, the city was the stuff of my nightmares. Even though the journey out of the city would only take a little over an hour by car, in the apocalyptic world rife with aberrants, it had become a seemingly never-ending path. We only managed to escape after an immeasurable amount of time and countless deaths of companions.

And now, I was actually deliberately going into the city for a hunt. My emotions were in complete turmoil, and naturally, fear was in the mix. After all, no one knew better than me how terrifying aberrants were—but there was a trace of excitement too.

In the past, aberrants would send me scurrying in fear like a rat, to avoid getting swallowed in one gulp. But now, I was going after aberrants like *they* were the rats. *I'm going to make them into my evolution chow!*

"Shuyu."

I looked over at Dàgē. He looked like he had something to say, but the words caught in his throat the moment he saw me turn my head, and he swallowed them back.

"Dàgē, what's up?" I asked in confusion.

Dàgē gave a chuckle as he replied, "I originally wanted to tell you to be careful, but seems like there's no need."

"Why?" My confusion deepened. Granted, telling me to be careful was a little pointless, since I was absolutely confident that I wouldn't lose to any person in the merc troop—except for Dàgē. Instead of telling me to be careful, such words were probably best directed to the others. *But isn't it the most natural thing in the world for a big brother to be worried about his little bro?*

I felt a little miffed at losing a chance for him to express his worry for me.

Ceng Yunqian draped an arm across my shoulder and gave me a meaningful look as she said, "Going by your expression just now, it should be the aberrants who should be worried, so why would Boss still need you to be careful?"

Come again? What expression? The bad habit of showing all my emotions on my face had carried over from my previous life into my current one, and it really was very hard to change.

"Your killing aura just now wasn't half bad at all." Xiao Sha remarked with a hint of praise, "Doesn't lose in the slightest against us mercs."

Guan Weijun's already lived through ten years of the apocalypse. If we really had to have a competition on who has more blood on their hands, I'd win hands down.

"That's enough joking around. Concentrate."

Dàgē's smile vanished and everyone sobered up from the mood of good humor. Even that cheeky Cain now looked every inch the stern, disciplined soldier, so much so that I couldn't resist sneaking a peek at him. In response, he threw me a playful wink. A leopard couldn't change its spots—I really had to keep a close eye on this fella. *If he ever dares to bully women in the future, I'll be sure to beat him until he can't get up any more!*

"This mission isn't the same as any we've done before. Based on Xiao Sha's estimates, just the first floor alone may have over twenty aberrants. If we let them swarm us, we'll all die! So in the following

operation, if anyone creates even the slightest of commotions, I'll personally kill them!"

Here, he gave me a cold glare and said severely, "Shuyu, the same applies to you!"

In that instant, the hair at the back of my neck stood up, and I almost raised my ice staff defensively to my chest—it was only through sheer willpower that I suppressed this impulse. I'd finally managed to smooth things over with Dàgē. The last thing I wanted was to make him think that I was still wary of him.

"Operation start!"

Under Dàgē's orders, the mercenary troop assembled into two lines, each raising their guns and aiming alertly to their left or right. Everyone had decided on entering through the back door, which was hanging open from its hinges and thus making it unnecessary to consider whether to bash it down or pick the lock.

I quietly followed at the back. This mercenary troop's teamwork was very good. Every person had their own position and assigned tasks, so there wasn't much I could help out with. Perhaps it would take working together many, many times before I'd finally have my place in this troop.

I observed every move they made. Cain and Zheng Xing were at the forefront, leading the way. They were armed with the heaviest firepower—Cain was holding onto a machine gun, the one that the previous mercenaries who attacked us had used, while Zheng Xing was

also using a light machine gun, probably a weapon that the JDT had originally brought along with them.

Behind them was Jiang Shutian, wielding a Desert Eagle. This type of gun had a very powerful recoil, but in exchange, its firepower was pretty good. After eating so many evolution crystals, Dàgē should be able to fire one single-handed with no problem whatsoever.

Lily and Ceng Yunqian were holding onto one automatic each, with the difference that Ceng Yunqian also had a sniper rifle slung across her back.

Xiao Sha and I were at the back of the formation. He also only had a single automatic, and he would periodically check behind him for any unusual activity.

Aside from that, everyone had knives at their waists or strapped to their calves. Xiao Sha even had a whole circle of knives wrapped around his waist.

I suddenly felt a little depressed and really wanted to get hold of a gun. Everyone had guns but me, and I was even wielding a long staff. Not only did I not fit in, I looked like some person from ancient times who had crossed over into the wrong era.

"Aberrant," Lily suddenly said in a low voice, "at the very end of the corridor."

It was only after she pointed it out that everyone else spotted it. The aberrant was still quite far away from where we were and was

crouching down in the corner. It was even screened by a potted plant. If not for Lily's tip, we would have probably gone a long way down the corridor before seeing it. By then, the aberrant would have noticed us long since.

At the beginning stages of the apocalypse, enhanced vision was quite useful. But in a few years' time, humans and aberrants would be able to detect each other's presences long before coming in sight. At that point, guns would have outlived their usefulness, and enhanced vision would also become worthless.

I was a bit worried for Lily.

But she didn't quite warrant any worry yet. As she walked up to the front, she pulled out a cylindrical item. It was a silencer. She attached it to her handgun and fired without a hint of hesitation. From where we were standing, I could only see a large leaf being blown off the potted plant. It seemed like the aberrant behind it had fallen over as well.

Then, Xiao Sha dashed ahead. I caught a glimpse of a shadow flickering down the long, long corridor like a flash of lightning, all the way to the back of the potted plant. There, he whipped out a knife and stabbed down at the aberrant's head.

Dàgē's threat to personally kill anyone who made a sound finally made sense. I had been wondering what on earth he had been going on about when everyone was armed with guns. Just one gunshot was more than enough noise. *So they had silencers... and Xiao Sha.*

"Shuyu," Dàgē suddenly turned back to look at me, "you think you can handle being the lookout at the back to see if there are any aberrants sneaking up on us? That way, Xiao Sha can be up front to quickly eliminate the aberrants ahead."

I nodded, promising seriously, "Sure, not a problem."

Actually, I could dash ahead to quickly eliminate aberrants, too, and I'd definitely do it better than Xiao Sha.

Firing out ice knives, rushing ahead, freezing shut its mouth, busting its head with the ice staff—this can be done all in a breath's time, and 100% guaranteed death for the aberrant!

But seeing as I'd just joined the troop, I shouldn't be thinking about aiming for the heavens and becoming one of the main fighters. I was better off if I just stayed at the back, accumulating trust and confidence among the troop.

The troop continued to advance, and I followed at the back. Aside from keeping an eye out, there wasn't much to do.

Although none of them had practiced their powers much, just the mercenaries' quality and weaponry were evidently quite adequate when confronting the existing aberrants that were still quite brainless. Dàgē seemed intent on clearing out the place, so we went into every single room. First, we would let Lily use her gun and silencer to kill aberrants that were clustered together, and then everyone would spread out to deal with the remaining scattered aberrants. This was done not with guns, but knives.

This surprised me a bit. In my previous life, at times like this, no one dared to engage in close combat with the aberrants.

But with a little thought, it became obvious why that was the case. At the time, everyone around me was an ordinary person. At most, they were police officers or soldiers, but they were definitely not as professional as mercenaries. Furthermore, we still hadn't figured out what was going on at the time, and we were all afraid that we would become "zombies" if we got bitten, so of course we didn't dare get close. But now with my advice, everyone knew that being bitten wouldn't turn you into an aberrant, so naturally they weren't as scared.

One, two... six... ten. I silently counted the number of aberrants and breathed a sigh of relief. Judging from how many aberrants were still around, the probability that there was a tier one aberrant around feeding on them was quite low.

Even if one really did appear, with me and the mercenary troop, it wasn't something we couldn't handle. I was just worried that before we could react, the tier one aberrant would have already injured someone first. If it was the sneak attack of a speed-type tier one aberrant, even I wouldn't be able to intervene in time.

Opening a few doors, putting down ten aberrants—it all went smoothly, without a hitch, and I didn't need to help out in the slightest. The original tension and alertness also started to fade. Perhaps this police station operation was much easier than I'd anticipated.

Soon, we arrived at a set of double doors. Judging from the size of the

doors, the inside would be the main office area. Dàgē raised a hand to stop everyone. Then, with a single gesture to Xiao Sha, Xiao Sha moved forward to gently ease open one door. A quick look and his face turned a little ashen. He indicated an amount with his hand—*over ten aberrants!*

Dàgē's expression darkened, and he turned to ask me, "Xiao Yu, how many can you kill?"

I blinked and replied, "As long as there aren't any tier one aberrants, I can probably kill twenty before running out of energy."

If it was a tier one aberrant, I would only be able to engage one, and there would be no guarantee that I'd be the one coming out on top.

"..." Everyone gawked at me wordlessly.

Even with Dàgē's strong mental resilience, he also started a little. Then, he actually had the gall to propose, "Then go in and deal with those aberrants. The others will observe."

Dàgē, isn't your resilience a little too high?! Are you okay with pushing your little bro into a pile of aberrants just like that? Have you even considered the possibility that I might have blurted out that number on impulse? Youngsters nowadays are ignorant and hate to lose, you know?

I glared accusingly at Dàgē. *This is an absolute violation of the labor laws—how can he make me go up against twenty of them by myself?!*

Dàgē just arched an eyebrow at me and gestured at the door with the Desert Eagle in his hand. He didn't even need to open his mouth for me to know what he was saying—*come on, go!*

I'll definitely tell on Dàgē once I'm home with Junjun. That's right, and I'll be sure to tell Uncle and Auntie too...

As I grumbled inwardly at Dàgē, I stepped forward. Xiao Sha, who was by the door, moved out of the way but didn't go far. He just stood to one side, his eyes boring into me, as though he was afraid he'd miss out on any move I made.

I gripped the ice staff in my hands. I couldn't help but be a little nervous. Although I'd said that I could fight up to twenty, that was under the condition that they weren't all coming at me at once. I needed a little time between each in order to pull it off.

Previously, when I was out hunting aberrants by myself, I'd fought no more than five in one go because of my cowardice. I'd never had the experience of fighting ten-plus on my own.

I should've said five! I regretted it so badly. That's why you should never boast about your abilities, or you'll end up in my situation where you'll have to fight over ten aberrants!

Next time, I'll know better. Whenever I'm talking about my own abilities, I'll always divide by five!

I pushed lightly on the door and observed the situation inside. On the left, close to the door, were five aberrants. They were crouched

in the corner, fighting for food. I couldn't tell if they were eating a human or an aberrant. In the middle of the room, there were six aberrants meandering around the office desks aimlessly. On the right, by the wall some distance away, there were a few sleeping slumped against each other, probably because they were nocturnal aberrants. As they were all piled together, I couldn't tell if it was a group of four or five.

The situation was much better than I'd expected. These aberrants were largely split into three groups, and each group was a little distance from the others. The nearest group was eating, and the farthest group was even sleeping, so really, the situation was much better than it could've been.

I pulled away from the doors and said softly, "Dàgē, if I'm acting alone, it's impossible to avoid making any sound, you know?"

I didn't expect Dàgē to actually nod and say, "We're almost done with the clean-up anyway. Just don't raise too much of a fuss and attract aberrants from outside."

Hearing that, I couldn't help but roll my eyes at him. Of course I didn't want to create a commotion, but the problem was that I had no way of knowing how the aberrants would react. There were so many aberrants there, and some were quite far away, so it was impossible to wipe them all out from the get go. *If they start howling, what can I do?!*

Looks like Dàgē is set on wanting me to fight those ten-odd aberrants by myself. And he even wants me to keep the noise levels down!

Hmph!

As I frowned in thought over how to defeat the aberrants, Dàgē didn't hurry me, but at the same time, he didn't say things like "If you don't think you can do it, then never mind." *He really is planning on sending his little brother to his doom... Fine, if the condition is not to raise "too much of a fuss," then I can still manage somehow. And anyway, "too much" is a matter of personal judgment!*

Everyone looked on in incomprehension as I took off my shoes and socks, and gently pushed open the doors while completely barefooted. Even if the others were just going to watch from the sidelines, I was still going to make them act as a distraction. Although they wouldn't do anything, just having so many people standing at the door would be enough to scare the aberrants and delay their rush at me.

The aberrants wandering around in the middle were the first to look over. But because they were some distance away and it didn't immediately click in their heads, they just came to a halt, first looking at me, then at the group of mercenaries standing at the door. As expected, they didn't dare to act carelessly.

But I wasn't planning on dealing with them first. They were moving around in twos or threes and were clearly less inclined to forming packs than the groups that were eating or sleeping, so they were the least dangerous of the lot.

I first glided toward the aberrant group that was eating in the corner. Yes, glided.

I'd already created ice blades beneath both feet, like those of ice skates. But just those two blades of ice alone were not enough for me to glide smoothly—I had to create a layer of ice below the blades to act as the gliding path.

This layer of ice couldn't be too thick, or I'd run out of energy very quickly, and it needed to be no more than a few centimeters in front of my feet. Otherwise, the aberrants would be able to guess where I was gliding to by just looking at the path of ice. These details were very finicky, and although I'd already practiced this for quite a while, I hadn't used it in combat until today.

If I really do fall over, I don't believe that Dàgē won't come rescue his own dìdì!

"Xiao Yu, you rock!" Ceng Yunqian threw me a few words of praise from the doorway where she was lounging oh so casually.

But it wasn't that I rocked. This was called "knowledge equals power." When I first saw the Ice Emperor's fight, he had also fought in this gliding manner. The differences were that I was nowhere as fast as he was, and that the Ice Emperor had glided through the air. He hadn't seemed to care how much energy he expended as he wove paths of ice and snow through the skies, paths that glittered like layers of crystals and rainbows—a truly breathtaking sight.

I drew out an ice knife, picked one aberrant that still had hair and flung the knife at it. The knife directly penetrated the back of its skull, and it slumped down, half a hand still clenched in its teeth.

I was right. Aberrants that still had hair were likely not to have very hard skulls. In the eyes of someone who'd lived ten years in the apocalypse, that hair was a cover-up that screamed "look at me!" Of course, the dagger coated in ice powers also helped a lot.

I arrived a moment after the dagger hit its mark. Stooping low, I struck out horizontally and stabbed the ice staff at the back of the skull of another aberrant. *Pop!* While the tip of the staff was blunt, I had built up enough momentum while gliding to penetrate the back of its skull. Then, I angled the staff upwards and destroyed its brain.

At the same time, I reached out to touch the aberrant lying on the floor. It was still twitching slightly, not completely dead.

Actually, if it were the average dagger, the aberrant wouldn't have gone down so easily. Killing an aberrant required completely smashing apart its brains. One knife stab wasn't enough to kill an aberrant, but because this was an ice dagger brimming with freezing energies, just one touch was enough to cause injury, not to mention having the whole thing stuck into your brain. Rather than saying that the aberrant fell to the knife stab, it would be more accurate to say that its brains were frozen, and it was directly sent into "hibernation."

Gripping the ice dagger, I twisted the handle and completely mashed up its brains. Then, I yanked the dagger out, but instead of stowing it away, I stabbed it toward the aberrant at the side. My other hand moved at the same time, and I jabbed the staff into that aberrant's mouth. It was in the middle of opening its mouthful of shark-like teeth, staring at me in astonishment as if it hadn't known how to react.

This shark-mouthed aberrant's skull looked pretty tough. Although it wasn't impossible to crack it open like a watermelon, doing so would create too much noise. Though it probably wouldn't attract aberrants from outside, it would wake up the sleeping aberrants jumbled up in a pile farthest inside. If those aberrants came at me all at once, I'd have no choice but to yell, "Dàgē, help!" so I couldn't just break open its head.

I attacked the aberrant with both hands. Actually, doing so involved a certain amount of risk, but I had no choice but to attack this way, or I'd simply not have enough time to deal with the aberrant.

Although I'd managed to execute both attacks, I wasn't celebrating. Catching them off guard was the easiest way to win—and now that I'd killed two aberrants in a row, the rest had had enough time to react. The next one wouldn't go down so easily.

Although my dagger had flashed out like lightning and the aberrant looked surprised, it managed to roll to one side to dodge the strike. Fortunately, it was still hanging on to the piece of meat in its mouth, so it wasn't able to let out a cry. It seemed intent on keeping the meat gripped in its jaws, but that suited me just fine.

The dagger strike failed, but the ice staff succeeded in entering that shark mouth. It went right through the roof of its mouth and into its brain.

"Xiao Yu!"

I heard Dàgē's urgent cry and felt a strong gust of wind coming at me

from the side. However, I didn't have any time to evade, and a slap directly struck my face—but only succeeded in shattering the layer of ice that had frozen over my skin.

Aberrants that were quick enough that their blows were unavoidable never had much power. After the slap shattered the layer of ice, the remaining force wasn't enough to hurt me.

Fortunately for me, Jiang Shuyu's ability was ice; and even better was that Guan Weijun had seen the Ice Emperor's battle. Come to think of it, perhaps the reason I'd had enhanced vision in my previous life was to observe that battle.

I let go of the ice staff and grabbed at the hand that had hit my face, giving the dagger that had previously failed a success in yet another head strike!

Then, I leapt at the group's final aberrant and finished it off without much difficulty.

Although I had done a lot, due to the speed I was moving at, the whole process didn't even take ten seconds. After dealing with the last aberrant in that group, I immediately glided toward the wandering ones.

Although I knew every second was precious, I couldn't help but turn my head and sneak a peek at Dàgē. He deliberately kept a stony face, despite the chuckling that came from the others around him.

I knew it. Dàgē is still the most anxious one about his little bro. He

isn't thorough enough in playing the villain.

Once I reached the wandering aberrants, I continued gliding and used my momentum to bust open one of their brains. The more I fought, the more I understood why the Ice Emperor had used gliding in his fights. Aside from the speed by itself, the momentum also increased the power of your attacks.

With that added force, my attacks became simpler. It was just that, with the added constraint that I couldn't create too much of a commotion, I had to use the daggers for most of my attacks. It was only for aberrants with big enough mouths, and who just happened to be opening their mouths to cry out, that I would shut them up with one blow of the staff—or perhaps a more apt description would be making it so they would never be able to shut their mouths again.

I came to an abrupt halt mid-glide and leaned forward, whirling my leg around in a roundhouse kick. The ice blade under my foot left a bloody line right down the center of the aberrant's face and sliced his nose off. Originally, I'd wanted to see if I could slash open his head, but that was too naïve of me—the ice blades that I'd created on the spot for gliding simply weren't sharp enough.

I had no choice but to glide behind him and add a stab to the back of his head. I even twisted the handle two full turns to make sure his brains were thoroughly mashed.

Maybe I really should add a spear head to the staff. If I were holding onto a spear instead of a staff, my movements would have been much smoother. I wouldn't be held back by the loud smack the staff would

make on impact with an aberrant's head, nor by the fact that I had to close with the enemy in order to attack with a dagger.

Six wandering aberrants ended up being too many for me to handle after all. Before I could finish them off, the sounds of combat had already woken up the last group of aberrants sleeping at the back. They quickly got up, totaling to five. These aberrants all slunk around on their elbows and knees, their movements just like a dog's. However, their appearance was closer to a human's, except that the joints touching the ground had become extremely large, and their jaws yawned wide open like a dog's. They looked extremely odd, neither human nor dog.

They fanned out as they stalked toward me, planning to trap me in a circle. The situation was starting to look bad.

There were still three wandering aberrants, and although I wanted to strike first and deal with the three in front of me, I had the feeling that those five would attack right when I moved to finish off the three... *No, I must be wrong! There's no way they'd be so clever? These five shouldn't all be tier one aberrants; otherwise, we'd already be dead meat.*

Before I could decide on my course of action, the three near me had already leapt toward me. They were shaped differently from the dog aberrants—they were upright. Each aberrant looked somewhat different from the other. The only commonality between them was that they still retained their human forms; there weren't many parts of them that had transmuted.

At this stage, I had no choice but to fight. I decided to throw caution to the wind and forget about “commotion” and whatnot. Just as I was about to crack open the brains of the leading aberrant, there was a light *put*, and a small spurt of blood burst out from between his eyes.

“Xiao Yu, don’t worry about these three. Deal with the five at the back.”

Thanks, Dàgē—but I’m still going to tell Shujun that you bullied me. At most, I’ll leave out Uncle and Auntie.

Since Dàgē had spoken, I wove around the three and rushed toward the five at the back. It was a no-brainer that these five were speed-type aberrants. They looked like dogs, so there was no way they weren’t quick.

Looking at them, I made up my mind. *I’m going to fight it out with them!*

I hadn’t dared to try difficult maneuvers in combat in the past, because if anything happened while I was by myself, then it’d be game over for me. *But now that there’s a whole bunch of people here, including my own Dàgē, who’s watching over me like I’m a baby and who wouldn’t just stand by if anything happened, what better time is there to try out those moves that I’ve only dared to try during practice?*

I cradled the tip of the staff, and like I was pulling on dough to make noodles, I crafted a spearhead that was about the length of my palm. Since I couldn’t bash in brains like watermelons, I had no choice but to pierce through them. The spearhead that was added on last-minute

was definitely not secure, but with my momentum from gliding, it shouldn't be difficult to split open their skulls.

Gripping my ice staff—no, wait, my ice spear—I made my decision. *I will never run away, even if I can't become the Ice Emperor, I'd—no!*

I will become the Ice Emperor!

Extra Chapter 1: The Journey Home (part one)

Sitting in the spacious first-class cabin on the plane and being served by an obsequious flight attendant, Jiang Shutian was suffering from a headache. He did not usually sit in first class, even though he could afford it. Being in such a luxurious environment and treated so well didn't sit well with him or any member of his troop, to the point that it felt worse than being in the muck and filth of a battle zone.

Unfortunately, he really had no choice this time. He had searched every airline, but because his request was so last-minute, there were simply no other seats available.

Jiang Shutian gazed out of the window at the blue sky and white clouds and completely failed to see anything out of the ordinary. Shuyu, however, had said on the phone that there was going to be a terrible disaster that would reach every corner of the world. Although he did not use the exact word, Jiang Shutian could guess what it meant.

The apocalypse?

"You believe him?"

Jiang Shutian turned to see Zheng Xing gazing steadily back at him. Zheng Xing continued to ask, "Those things Shuyu talked about. Boss, you really think it'll happen?"

"I hope it won't," Jiang Shutian replied calmly.

He had put the mission on hold at the last minute and even explained the situation truthfully to his troop. Although he could have made excuses, such as Shuyu's condition worsening, he did not want to lie to his brothers-in-arms, who had been with him through thick and thin. More importantly, he did not want his brothers to face the disaster that Shuyu had spoken about with no preparation whatsoever.

None of the troop believed in Jiang Shuyu's supposed "disaster," but Jiang Shutian ordered them to believe anyway. He made everyone go back home to their families and prepare for everything. Only the few troop members who didn't really have any other responsibilities were following him back to Meisia.

If nothing happened, his credibility as a leader would be utterly ruined.

Nevertheless, Jiang Shutian was more than willing to have his reputation trampled into the ground if it meant Shuyu and Shujun would live on in peace.

Zheng Xing said thoughtfully, "So Boss, you really believe this will happen? Have you never considered that Shuyu might be a little loony after getting hit in the head?"

Jiang Shutian fell into silence for a moment, then said simply, "I believe him."

Zheng Xing gave a wry smile and stopped his line of questioning. There were still a few hours before landing, so Jiang Shutian decided to catch up on some sleep while he had the chance. To make it back to Meisia in time, he had been so busy that he had not had any time to

rest. However, he simply could not fall asleep. A bad feeling was welling up inside him. Shuyu had told him that he should not return if he could not get home by six p.m., but the best he could do was grab a flight that would land in Zhongguan City roughly around that time. *Something will happen after six...?* No, the first deadline that Shuyu had blurted out had been midnight, so there should still be some buffer time. *But was Shuyu remembering to factor in the time needed to gather medicine and weapons, as well as the car journey from the city to our home?*

There were too many variables. Jiang Shutian had wanted to call home to verify the situation, but the phone on the aircraft would not connect. The flight attendant was also unable to explain why or resolve the issue, so she resorted to apologies again and again, irritating him so much that he sent her away.

He felt a little frustrated. He'd had to deal with a million things in order to push back the mission schedule at the very last minute and rush back to Meisia, so he had only set foot on the plane at the last possible moment. As a result, he had not had the time to call home before the plane took off. He had originally thought that he would be able to call from the plane, never imagining he would be in his current situation.

He headed to the washroom and pulled out his cell phone. Right now, he could not care less about things like breaking rules or interfering with air navigation.

The phone still would not connect.

There were myriad reasons for not being able to connect a call,

especially tens of thousands of feet up in the air. Nevertheless, Jiang Shutian was certain—Shuyu was right.

Jiang Shutian glanced at his watch. It was already 1700 hours, and there was still one more hour before landing.

He returned to his seat. Zheng Xing was watching him alertly, his expression rather grave.

"Tell everyone to prepare themselves," Jiang Shutian said calmly.

With that, Zheng Xing's expression sank. There was no one who would react well to news of the apocalypse, but he still dutifully went around to inform the others, some of whom were seated quite far away because the tickets had been bought so late.

When Zheng Xing returned, Jiang Shutian lifted his head to give him a meaningful look and indicated the window.

Zheng Xing peered out curiously—and saw the white clouds slowly turning black.



"Have we managed to reach any of our contacts?"

Jiang Shutian's expression was extremely dark. They were originally scheduled to arrive at 1800 hours, but because the fog would not disperse, the flight crew had initially refused to land. They insisted on circling for two hours, until it was past eight p.m. Assuming that Jiang Shutian had to get his troop home before midnight, he had a little

more than two hours to work with if he deducted the time needed for the car ride home from Zhongguan City—two hours which had to include the driving time to find their contacts.

"The reception is very bad," Zheng Xing frowned deeply and cut his call as he shook his head. "I can't get through to Old Man Lee."

Hearing that, Jiang Shutian started weighing whether they should continue trying to reach their contacts or just head straight home without procuring any weaponry.

Someone suddenly shouted, "I got it, I got it! I've got Jin-gē!"

Jin Zhan? Jiang Shutian frowned. He knew the man, but while he'd had dealings with him in the past, he'd never bought weaponry from him before. That was because Jin Zhan was technically not a firearms dealer, but actually the young master of a mafia group. His firearms were largely for his own people's use. While he did also do "sales," the prices were prohibitively expensive.

Jiang Shutian did have a single Desert Eagle from Jin Zhan, which had been a gift. The quality of Jin Zhan's goods was indeed high—just like his usual price tags. Still, at times like this, beggars could not be choosers, so he nodded and responded, "Then, let's find Jin Zhan."

"Good job, Wu the Ewe!" Cain patted his companion's shoulder.

"My name is Wu Zaiyu!" came the heated protest.

"Time to go, little sheep." Jiang Shutian led the way and reached out

to ruffle Zaiyu's hair as he passed.

Wu Zaiyu screwed up his face. *Boss is good in every single way, except for his tendency to tease people and ruffle their hair!*

With this light-hearted interjection, the atmosphere eased a little. News of the apocalypse had put them on edge and destroyed even the mood for conversation.

However, the lighter atmosphere did not last long. As soon as they neared the exit from the airport terminal, they could see lots of travelers crowding around inside the doors. On the other side, the air was heavy with fog that was noticeably black. It was making everyone a little wary, though not to the point of panic. After all, severe pollution caused all sorts of crazy things. Even if they hadn't experienced it personally, most people would have seen it on television. However, in the eyes of the JDT, the fog held a completely different meaning. Although they were unsure if it really spelled the apocalypse, they were absolutely certain that it wasn't just bad news—it was very, very bad news.

Fortunately, most of the troop members Jiang Shutian had brought with him had no worries or responsibilities. Although it was quite difficult for them to accept what was happening, it was not to the point that they would have a nervous breakdown. They had simply gone from complete disbelief and thinking that their Boss was so doting on his little bro that he had lost his wits, to... Well, they still did not completely believe Shuyu's story, but at least they were on the fence. However, the better description was perhaps not that they did not believe it, but that they did not want to believe it.

"We have no more time. Go!" Jiang Shutian marched at the head of the troop as he issued his orders. "Zheng Xing, Jenny, go find our contacts at the hospital and get the meds, then regroup with us after. Everyone else, come with me to meet Jin Zhan."

Worried, he added to the first two, "No matter what happens, even if you don't manage to get the meds, you *must* rejoin us by 2230!"

Zheng Xing obediently set off. With Jenny in tow, he leaped into a taxi and left right away. As for Jiang Shutian and the rest of his crew, they had pre-arranged a minibus for transportation.

Jiang Shutian was not too concerned about Zheng Xing's mission. They had already come to an agreement with their contacts on the medicine, so unless there was some kind of complication, they should be able to get it without a hitch. However, they simply had had no way of securing weapons ahead of time given how tight their time frame was. When people heard that they needed the weapons delivered within two days and the quantities involved, they backed off and refused to come to an agreement ahead of time for fear of being dragged into something. All of them had insisted on meeting face-to-face before entering negotiations.

And now, they could not even make calls!

"Boss, want some water?" Lily asked as she held up a glass. Jiang Shutian waved it away, then sat back in contemplation. He remembered that Shuyu had first mentioned weapons before he remembered the medicine, so that meant that weapons were going to

be critical. *What kind of an apocalypse would make weapons even more valuable than medicine?*

Perhaps the situation was going to be even worse than he had thought. His only consolation was that there was no traffic, so they were able to meet Jin Zhan within half an hour.



Jin Zhan frowned as he gazed at the list of weapons in his hand. There was a row of people in black suits on either side of him, facing off with Jiang Shutian, who was standing in front of his mercenary troop. If there had been witnesses, most would assume they were two mafia gangs deep in negotiations.

Finally, Jin Zhan shook the sheet of paper, asking with a raised eyebrow, "Jiang Shutian, is this list for real?"

Jiang Shutian didn't have time to waste in idle talk and flatly replied, "Yes!"

"When do you need it?"

"Now."

Jin Zhan fell speechless. Having been brought up in the underworld, he had seen many things despite his tender age. However, at that very moment, he had no idea what Jiang Shutian was intending. If not for the fact that he knew the man, he would have thought that Jiang Shutian had gone nuts and was planning a revolt. For better or worse, despite their limited interactions—after all, they had met only a

handful of times—both men were very clear about the other's personality.

He spoke frankly. "Jiang Shutian, even if you searched the whole of Zhongguan City, there wouldn't be a single person who could provide you with this quantity. Anyone else standing here would've turned away and left the moment they saw this list. They wouldn't have even stayed long enough to hear you demand it 'now'!"

Jiang Shutian knew that all too well. He had been refused many times before.

"Just give me what you can. And if you have anything aside from this list—weapons or battle supplies—sell me what you can there too."

Jiang Shutian added with emphasis, "Deliver it now and I'll pay you *three times the price!*"

Jin Zhan knitted his brows together, replying, "This isn't a question of money. What do you want so many weapons for?"

"You, a firearms dealer, are asking about the reasons for a purchase? That isn't playing by the rules."

Jin Zhan said tonelessly, "With the quantity you're purchasing, there's no way anyone in this country would dare to sell to you unless you gave a hint about what it's all for. This isn't a country at war."

Jiang Shutian's expression clouded over. The warning about the apocalypse had come from his own little brother. But even as the older sibling, he himself had not been sure what to believe, so he didn't

have high hopes for someone he had only met a few times. However, judging from the situation, it seemed that he would not be able to get anything unless he talked.

"Can I have a word with you? Just you and me."

The moment he spoke, the two rows of black suits immediately took a step forward. Seeing that, the JDT instantly reached for the weapons at their sides. They could not bring guns into the country, but smuggling a few knives in by calling them artistic pieces was a different matter.

The subordinates on each side were bristling for action, but the two leaders kept their cool. Jin Zhan could not help but rub his chin at Jiang Shutian's strange behavior. It was really beginning to pique his interest.

"Leave your weapons on the table and follow me."

Jin Zhan stood up. Jiang Shutian left the dagger that had been at his waist on the table and let one of the black suits do a quick frisk. Then, he followed Jin Zhan to a side room.

Once inside, Jiang Shutian drove straight to the heart of the matter. "You have to promise me, as long as I am not staging an insurrection or planning to harm you, you will sell those weapons to me."

If he let slip about the apocalypse, it was unlikely that Jin Zhan would believe him. But in that million-to-one chance that he did, wouldn't he keep the weapons for himself?

He wanted to fib his way out of it, but this was Jin Zhan. Within the country, the man had a much better grasp of information than he did, so tricking him was impossible. As for some story about how the firearms would be taken out of the country, Jiang Shutian was not even able to persuade himself to believe such a lie, let alone someone else. With no other choice left to him, he could only hope that Jin Zhan would keep his word.

Hearing that, Jin Zhan looked Jiang Shutian up and down with considerable interest. Suddenly, he asked, "Is this related to the black fog outside?"

Jiang Shutian hesitated for only a moment. He merely had to think about the ticking clock to decide to find out, right then and there, if he would be getting his firearms. So he nodded.

"How serious is it?"

"It affects the whole world."

So this means... an apocalypse? Jin Zhan's expression sank. Although he did not want to believe it, he could not find any reason to refute it. If Jiang Shutian dared lie to him, it wasn't something that could be resolved with a simple apology. Even if he managed to escape, he would never be able to set foot inside the country again. If he were an unmarried man with no familial ties, it was possible he might do such a thing. However, rumor had it that he *did* in fact have family, so it was unlikely he would lose his mind to the point of ignoring the danger that they would be put in.

After assessing the situation, Jin Zhan replied crisply, "Fine. I promise. Tell me."

"Before midnight, take the people most important to you somewhere safe. Prepare weapons and medicine, especially antibiotics, and stock up on as much imperishable food as possible."

"That's it?" Even Jin Zhan could not hide his surprise.

Jiang Shutian was a little embarrassed. He should have known better. Gēge was now paying dearly for not believing in his dìdi.

Jin Zhan laughed as he shook his head. "Isn't that too little information?"

Jiang Shutian had no choice but to repeat, "*I will pay you three times the price.*"

"If there really were an apocalypse, wouldn't money turn into useless paper?" Jin Zhan thought for a moment before making his decision.

"Sure, I'll sell it to you. But I can't give you that quantity. I'll sell half that amount, five times the price!"

If he was being tricked, he was still making a massive killing with this transaction. And even if Jiang Shutian did use the weapons to stage a revolt, Jin Zhan had full confidence that he would be able to stay out of it. Furthermore, there wasn't much time left. It would be midnight soon, so if he didn't start preparing now, there wouldn't be enough time to do so. The black fog was simply too bizarre, even interfering

with telecommunications. So Jin Zhan chose to believe to be on the safe side.

Jiang Shutian rejoiced and quickly added, "Give them to me within the hour."

"Impossible!" Jin Zhan immediately refused. "At the very minimum, we will need an hour and a half. Otherwise, the most I can do is get my subordinates to sell you the guns they have on them right now. For anything else, even if you paid me ten times the price, I still wouldn't be able to produce it. You do realize that we can't even make calls now?"

Jiang Shutian looked at his watch. It was currently 2110, and no matter how recklessly they drove, the journey home would still take at least an hour, even without factoring in the black fog spreading outside.

"Fine!" Jiang Shutian agreed decisively. "But you need to stay with me until I get my weapons."

Jin Zhan glanced at him, not seeming to care at all. "Sure."

Jiang Shutian relaxed. It seemed that Jin Zhan's base of operations was nearby.

With the clock ticking, Jin Zhan left the side room without further chatter and started ordering his black-suited underlings about. He did not try to hide anything from Jiang Shutian but issued orders to his various underlings right in front of him.

"Gather the items on this list immediately. Take half and return here in one and a half hours.

"Go fetch my mother, Feng, and Xiao Yue, and take them directly to the villa. Get them there within one hour. That's an order!

"Go to the hospital right away and gather the medicines we usually use. Get more of the antibiotics too. Then go to the supermarket that we operate and transport all the food there to the villa. Move as much as you can..."

Jiang Shutian could not do anything except wait to one side. He was incredibly worried about the situation at home, but the phone still refused to connect.

"Boss," Lily murmured, "should we prepare some food?"

Jiang Shutian frowned at the question. He turned to check on the spreading fog before shaking his head, saying, "Don't bother. We're short on time. We're leaving the moment we get the weapons. Things aren't looking good for us to split up into teams to bulk purchase. Besides, since Shuyu knew this would happen, he should be making all the preparations he can on his end."

Weapons and antibiotics were both things Shuyu could not lay his hands on. Given that he had only mentioned those two things on the phone, it would seem to indicate that he was preparing everything else.

With too little information on hand and no working phone lines,

Shutian could only dissect every single word that had been said in that one phone call. He hated himself for not asking for more clarification and blamed himself for being more suspicious than trusting, meaning that he was not prepared for the worst.

Jin Zhan was a man of his word. By 2300 exactly, Jiang Shutian received the guns and bullets he had wanted.

"I owe you one."

Jiang Shutian knew that people willing to sell him weapons in such a situation were few and far between, and were to be treasured.

The corner of Jin Zhan's mouth lifted. "If the disaster really happens, I'll owe you one too."

"Then let's just cancel the debts."

The two exchanged smiles, then turned and walked away from each other without another word. Time was running out.

Jiang Shutian looked over his troop members. Zheng Xing had already rejoined them with the meds, so all the to-do boxes were checked. The problem was the time left.

"All aboard!"

Back outside and in the driver's seat, Zheng Xing had a full view of the spreading black fog and an expression darkening to match. He switched on the fog lights, but when that did not improve the visibility

much, he had no choice but to turn and report, "Boss, in this situation—"

Jiang Shutian said blandly, "Everyone, fasten your seat belts."

Hearing that, Zheng Xing's expression darkened even further, all the way to pitch-black. The others simultaneously flinched and began fumbling for their seat belts. Even Cain, who was the most laid-back about that kind of stuff, was no exception.

Jiang Shutian said calmly, "Time to burn rubber. You used to be a racecar driver, right?"

"...Boss, no one burns rubber when visibility has dropped to ten feet. The only thing that'll be burning is our lives!"

"Everyone will die unless we get home anyway, so pick your cause of death."

Zheng Xing felt completely helpless and could only brace himself for a wild ride. What else could he do? Although the so-called "wild ride" only involved driving at around fifty to sixty kilometers per hour, in such low visibility conditions, that was really very wild!

The normally stoic crowd, who would not even bat an eye when reaching speeds of over a hundred, began to look like they were praying to God despite traveling at merely half that speed. Sadly, they could not maintain it for long. Even though Zheng Xing was once a racecar driver who would throw all caution to the winds in the olden days, he was still powerless in the face of traffic jams.

The clock was ticking down to midnight, which should have meant there wouldn't be much traffic. However, due to the black fog, everyone was panicking and wanted to escape from the city, so in the end, they were all jammed together on the roads.

Wu Zaiyu scratched his face as he said, close to tears, "Boss, is it really the apocalypse?"

Jiang Shutian's expression was grave—the worst-case scenario had occurred.

"Zaiyu, stop scratching!" Xiao Sha turned to ask the others, "Are you guys itchy?"

With that question, everyone discovered that their skin had a kind of tickling sensation, and the moment they noticed it, the itching got worse. Cain couldn't help but give a scratch or two, and it was only after a hard slap from Lily that he stopped.

Jiang Shutian too felt waves of ticklish pricking on his skin. *Is this black fog poisonous? Don't tell me that the danger Xiao Yu mentioned was the fog? So this black fog can poison people to death at midnight? But if so, how will returning home help? Or has Shuyu already prepared the house for this?*

"Zheng Xing, speak honestly. Is it possible to get home before 0100?" Jiang Shutian felt that, even with the most generous estimate, he couldn't hope that any buffer time would extend past one a.m.

"Boss, take a look yourself. Forget two hours, I'm not sure if we can get out of this mess even with five hours."

"What about going up on the sidewalk?"

Zheng Xing's jaw dropped a little, and he turned to look at the sidewalk. It was doable. With the spreading black fog causing a prickling pain, the sidewalks were mostly clear of people. While there was a lot of clutter along the sidewalk, meaning the drive wouldn't be smooth in the slightest, it was still better than not being able to move at all on the roads.

"0100 still isn't possible. The roads are too dark, and there are a lot of obstacles along the sidewalk. I'd be lucky to reach the forties."

That was already taking into account the fact that the bus had been modified. Its body was reinforced; otherwise, the car would quickly turn into a piece of scrap metal after crashing through just a few obstacles along the sidewalk, and they would have to ditch it.

Jiang Shutian took a deep breath, then ordered, "Drive on the sidewalk and get us to Odd-Foot. He should have gas masks at his place. We must be there by 0000!"

Ceng Yunqian said in bewilderment, "But will he still open shop given the situation?"

Jiang Shutian replied blandly, "It doesn't matter if he isn't open. We've just gotten ourselves some weapons, so we can blast down his door." These lines obviously tickled the troop's fancy, and they burst into

strained laughter.

Zheng Xing immediately shifted into reverse and stomped on the accelerator. With the traffic jam, the cars at the front and back of the bus were almost bumper to bumper, so when he went into reverse, he immediately crashed against the car behind him. But he simply did not care and just spun the wheel, charging directly onto the sidewalk.

The driver in the back car had just gotten out of his car in a rage, wanting an explanation, but the moment he saw that shocking scene, his eyes bulged and his jaw dropped. He was too stunned to care about explanations anymore.

They swerved left and right, crashing into everything along the way: street lights, advertisements, electrical boxes, vendor carts... He had long lost count of the number of things they had crashed into, but Zheng Xing felt that it was still a much smoother drive. Driving a bashed-up vehicle beat the boredom of being stuck in a traffic jam any day.

With lots of jerking and crashing, and plenty of surprises and scares along the way, Zheng Xing finally managed to arrive at the destination. As he got out of the bus, Jiang Shutian glanced at his watch. It was already midnight, so he had failed at getting home by the deadline. Getting gas masks was his number one priority. As for back home... he could only place his hopes in Shuyu.

The moment he thought that, Jiang Shutian's expression turned gloomy. He hated himself for having to pass the responsibility for his whole family to his dìdi, who had only just woken up from his grave

injuries. This dìdi had been in a coma for over a month, so it was likely that he could not even stand up, but now he was being forced to protect the family?

Yunqian looked back, remarking, "Boss, he really isn't open. So now...?" Jiang Shutian blasted open the door with one shot, snapped one line of "We go in," and stormed in first.

Everyone jumped in fright. Although Jiang Shutian was a very imposing person, he was actually also extremely calm and collected. There were many times when he intentionally put on a show of rage for bystanders, without actually being angry in the slightest. But now...

Cain snorted, "Blasting open someone's door the moment he arrives? Boss isn't planning to buy anything, is he? He's just going to take it by force."

Yunqian shook her head as she said, "If he can't get home, doors won't be the only thing Boss will blast apart."

"That's true."

They never imagined that those words would describe their life for the next few days, when they would have no choice but to blast away many things for survival... and for going home.

[To be continued]

Extra Chapter 2: One Day in the Apocalypse

Dropped

"Junjun, you have no idea how many women are utterly miserable in the apocalypse. You have to stand up for women and crush all the men in this world under your foot!"

"But Èrgē, you and Dàgē are men too?"

"Dàgē is a god, not a man. As for your Èrgē, I'm more than willing to be stepped on by you."

"Èrgē, you've dropped your sense of shame. Here, let me pick it up for you."

Flown Away

"Junjun, do you think I'm perverted for lewdly fantasizing about Dàgē? Boohooohoo..."

"No Èrgē, because Dàgē is far too hot. Even I get dazzled by him sometimes, and I think about doing stuff with him!"

What?! **stares balefully with a face full of tears**

"Ugh... Don't be like that, Èrgē, I think about stuff like that with you too sometimes!"

"Junjun, as a proactive, strong woman, you don't have to fantasize.

Realize your dreams! Come on, Èrgē is ready for you anytime!”

“Èrgē, your sense of shame has grown wings and flown away. Here, let me catch it for you.”

The Space Age

“Sigh, my hip hurts. I was too active last night. Man, I’m so tired. Thank god I still have plenty of stamina; otherwise I’d be beat!”

“Èrgē, was it a man or a woman last night?”

“What do you mean, a man or woman? It was an aberrant.”

“Èrgē! Your sense of shame has fired off into space on a rocket! Junjun can’t help you anymore!”

“What’re you talking about? Last night, all I did was wrestle the aberrant for most of the evening before I wore him out!”

“Èrgē, it’s fine, you don’t have to explain. Junjun won’t tell anyone. Boohoo...”

“W-wait! Junjun, don’t run off crying! Please believe me, your Èrgē’s sense of shame hasn’t gone to outer space!”

Papaya and Pork Ribs Won’t Help

“Èrgē, Èrgē, you always say you’re fantasizing about Dàgē. A-and you always say you want to marry me, right? H-have you ever thought

about me that way?" **blush**

"Uh, Junjun, you need to know, for someone to fantasize about you, you first have to have a bit of a figure. Whereas you... Sigh, at most you're a B?"

"...Liar, I've got a million."

"A million?"

"A million volts."

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH—"

Epilogue: Afterword

The appearance of *Dominion's End* was as shocking as the end of the world for me. When I first got struck by inspiration, I immediately started tapping away (sound of typing) and wrote feverishly every day until ungodly hours like I was nuts. But I had almost finished writing 70–80% of an entire book after a week, so it was no different from being crazy.

Even the various names came up smoothly. In the past, I've had to open up a Chinese name generator and spend half the day just choosing surnames and given names, but I hardly had to use it this time. Even the title just popped into my mind.

Dominion's End [Zhong Jiang, 終疆]: "zhong/終" means "end," while "jiang/疆" means "territory." In this context, I used it to mean the world, so "Dominion's End" actually just means "The End of the World." Using simplistic titles like "I Am a Knight"¹ would cause the author to be ridiculed for being uneducated, so I end up having to twist the titles around to pretend like I've got some semblance of sophistication.

When I came up with the title, I took the opportunity to look up the meaning of "jiang" and discovered it could be used as a surname. So that's the story behind the surname of the three Jiang siblings. Come to think of it, the name of the male protagonist—er, sort-of-male protagonist—Jiang Shuyu (疆書宇), sprung to mind just as quickly.

With "Shuyu" as a base, the big brother's and little sister's names were easy as well. The big brother is the family's pillar of strength holding up the sky, so naturally he became "Shutian" [書天, with "tian"

meaning sky]. For the younger sister, I used "jun/ 君" from "Guan Weijun" [關薇君] to make Jiang Shuyu reminisce about the past. That is how the Jiang siblings were named.

It didn't stop there, either. I had accumulated bits and pieces of plot, to the point where I had almost finished planning out the entire series, and it was just waiting to be written.

This all went so smoothly I was really kind of freaked out, but I had the feeling that I definitely had to write this book, *Dominion's End*, and the Jiang siblings were going to be born no matter what.

Rain will fall when the heavens dictate, and your mother will marry when she wants to; some things are just meant to be. There was no helping it, so I let them be born. That was how this baby of mine, *Dominion's End*, appeared. Fortunately, it was a very easy delivery for the author. It had its entire life planned out ahead of it from the moment it was born, so all that was left was for the parents to foot the bill for school fees.

My only worry was that there were rather a lot of combat scenes. Because I write out fights by first thinking out the movements in my head, then describing them, writing those scenes was like having a battle fought out in my brain. This really gave me headaches to no end.

But when I was posting the story online, the readers really enjoyed the fight scenes, which was totally unexpected for me. I even got comments like "Jiang Shuyu is the coolest protagonist," so I could only keep fighting on.

Because this series is in first person, to allow everyone to see the stories of characters besides Shuyu, each volume will have side stories. This volume's side story, "The Journey Home," is about Dàgē.

The side stories' length or number of parts is all up in the air, and it's possible that one volume will have quite a few side stories. Everything will depend on when and where different characters clamor for an appearance. Alternatively, if you have a character you're fond of, feel free to leave a comment on my website as inspiration for the side stories.

Originally, I wanted to have the entire "The Journey Home" in the first volume, but I realized I couldn't stop writing. So I ended up splitting it into halves. Fingers crossed that there won't be a third part, because while Dàgē is plenty cool, other characters want their turn in the spotlight too.

"One Day in the Apocalypse" was a bolt out of the blue, but you can more or less guess where the story is going from it (actually, not at all) and the true nature of various characters (this one's more believable). But because this was a spontaneous idea, how many parts there'll be or whether there'll even be a second part are all unknown.

Aside from that, this is a serial story, which means none of the volumes will have its own ending other than the final one. And the overall series will be quite long, at least seven or eight volumes.

Sigh, I don't know if I've missed anything. But if you have any questions, please feel free to ask on my website.

Hope everyone enjoys *Dominion's End*!

By Yu Wo

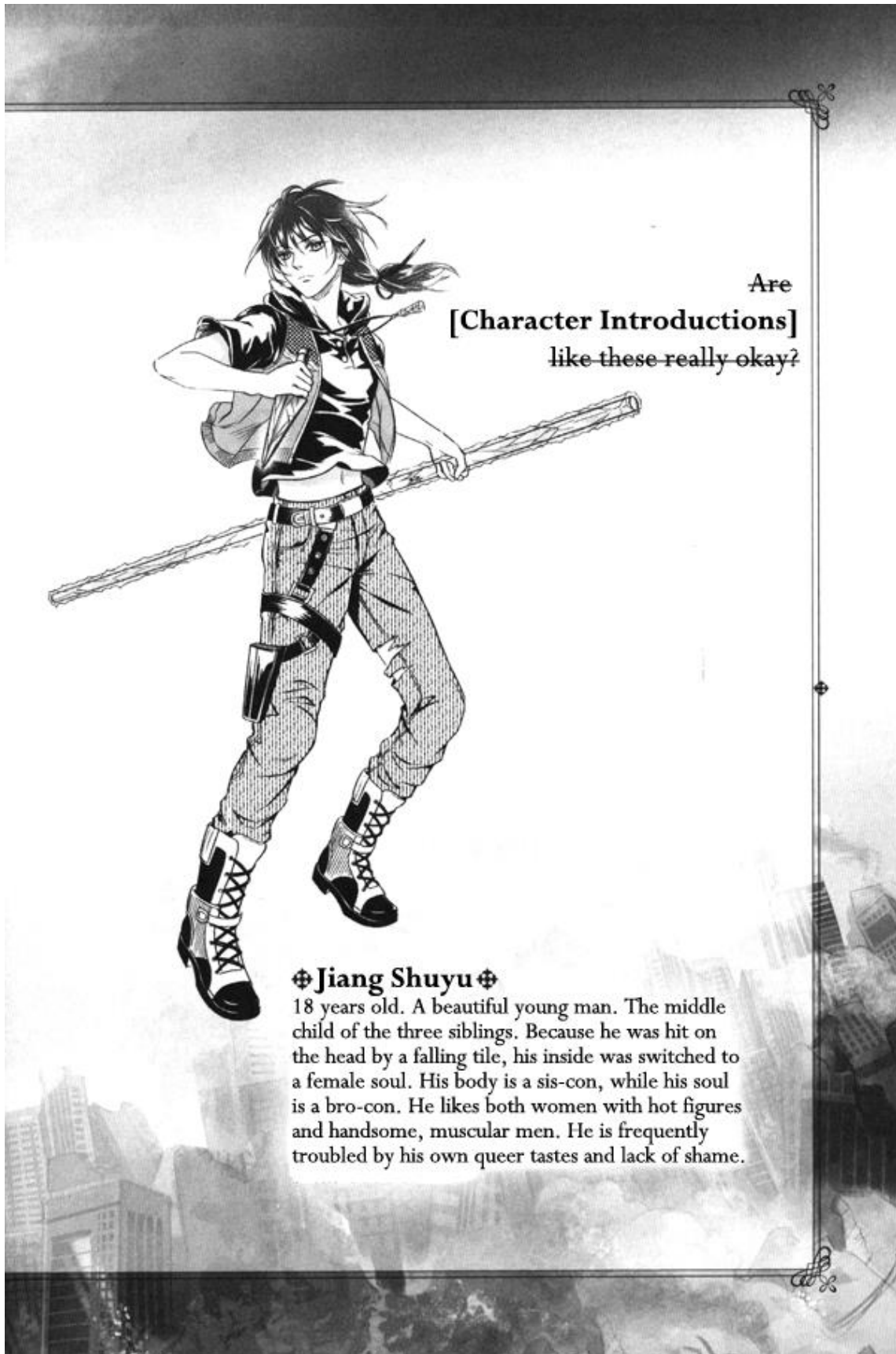
Website: <http://blog.xuite.net/kim1984429/yuwo>

Plurk: <http://www.plurk.com/pinkcorpse>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iamYuwo>



Are [Character Introductions] ~~like these really okay?~~



Jiang Shuyu

18 years old. A beautiful young man. The middle child of the three siblings. Because he was hit on the head by a falling tile, his inside was switched to a female soul. His body is a sis-con, while his soul is a bro-con. He likes both women with hot figures and handsome, muscular men. He is frequently troubled by his own queer tastes and lack of shame.



✧ Jiang Shujun ✧

15 years old. A pretty girl. The youngest of the three siblings. She is gentle, cute, wise, forgiving, lively, and adorable (to Shuyu). She loves Èrgē the most. She looks gentle and frail on the outside, but she dares to challenge Dàgē and fights to protect her Èrgē, to prevent him from being teased to tears by Dàgē.



✧ Jiang Shutian ✧

27 years old. The mighty Dàgē. The eldest of the three siblings. There's no need to describe all the many ways he is awesome and mighty. There's no need to describe the various ways he could take over the world. He's a complete boss-level character. He is extremely biased toward his own people and extremely merciless toward outsiders. His dìdi and mèimei are his heaven and earth respectively. Not someone you want to mess with.

Jiang Shujun

15 years old. A pretty girl. The youngest of the three siblings. She is gentle, cute, wise, forgiving, lively, and adorable (to Shuyu). She loves Èrgē the most. She looks gentle and frail on the outside, but she dares to challenge Dàgē and fights to protect her Èrgē, to prevent him from being teased to tears by Dàgē.

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Footnotes

¹ **"I am a Knight"**: The intended meaning behind *The Legend of Sun Knight's* Chinese title, *Wuming Qishi* (吾命騎士), which was worded to sound more sophisticated.